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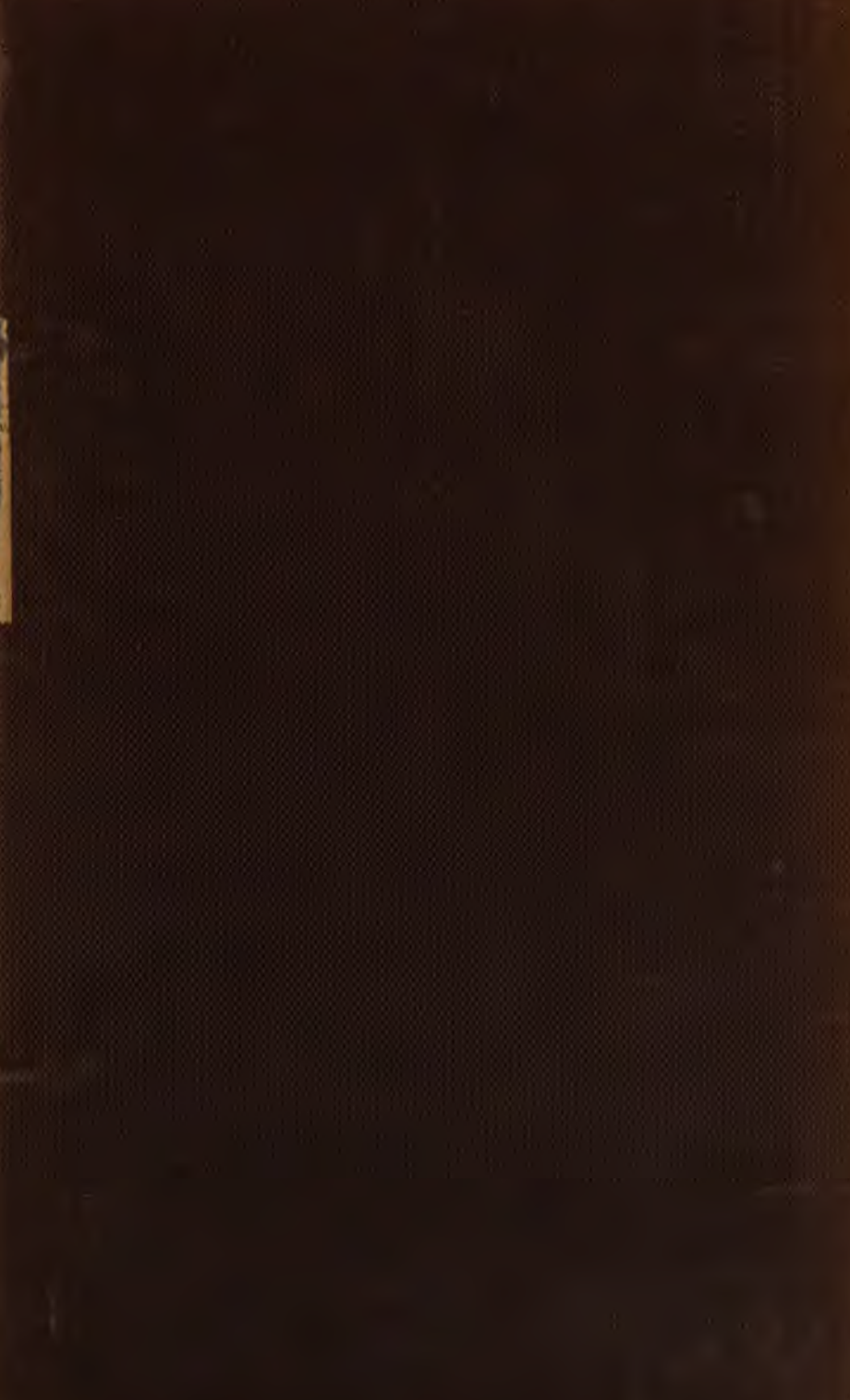
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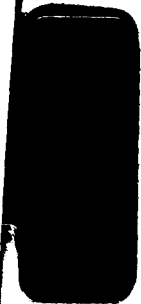
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THE YOUNGER SISTER.

A Nobel

BY

MRS. HUBBACK.

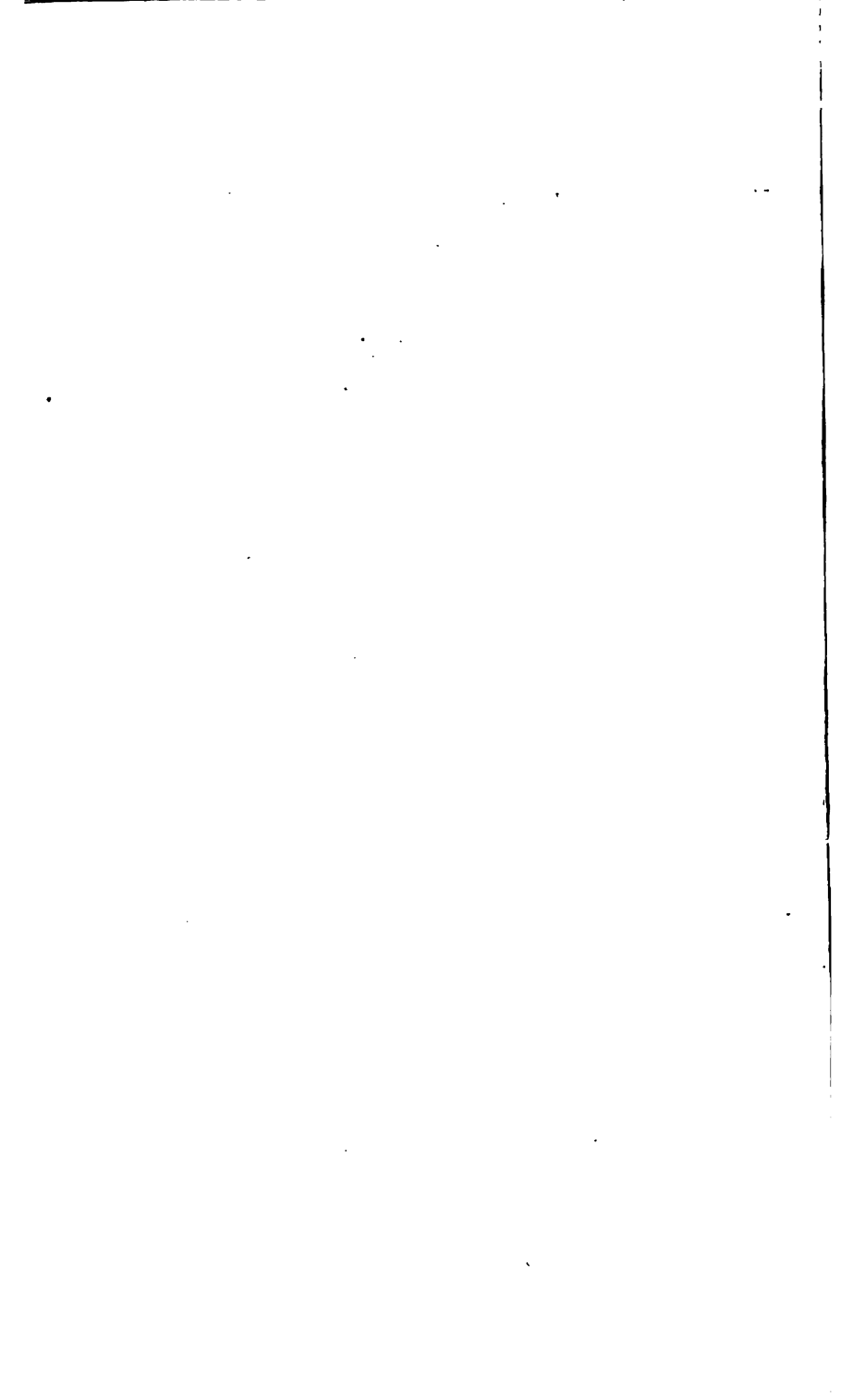
IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. II.



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1850.



THE YOUNGER SISTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE invitation to the important party was not for an early date; ten days must elapse before the arrival of the day expected to bring so much happiness with it. The comfort of the Watson family suffered alternations which could only be compared to the ebbing and flowing of the tide, but that their recurrence could not be calculated on with equal certainty. When the pleasure she was to enjoy occupied her mind, Mar-

garet was comparatively happy ; the arrangement of her dress, the minor difficulties about ornaments and shoes, were even then sufficient to destroy her equanimity, and detract from her peace of mind ; but this was nothing to the state of acidity and fermentation which her temper presented, when the grand insult of not being Miss Osborne's friend, and not invited to stay at the Castle, recurred in vivid colors to her memory.

But three days before the important morning, a very unexpected event threw the whole family into a ferment. Just as the two elder sisters were setting off to the town, to see if their new bonnets were making the progress which was desirable, the sudden appearance of a post-chaise startled them. Emma, who was in her father's room as usual, heard the wheels on the gravel, and naturally supposing that it was the old pony-chaise leaving the door, was perfectly astonished the next minute by the startling uproar which resounded through the hall. Loud laughter, and a mingled clatter of tongues, which might almost be denominated screaming, convinced her that whatever was the origin, it was not of a tragic nature, but her awakened curiosity made her long to know the cause, through

she feared to move, as her father had fallen into a gentle doze. A shriller exclamation than before suddenly roused him from his slumber, and starting up he exclaimed:

"What are those confounded women about? Emma, go and bid them all be quiet."

Emma escaped from the room to obey his behest, and on reaching the turn of the stairs paused a moment to see who was there; just then she caught her own name.

"Emma is at home," said Margaret, "and as I really want to go, I shall not mind you. Pen, you can go and sit with her."

"Very well, it's all the same to me," replied a stranger, who she inferred was her unknown sister, "I am sure I don't want to keep you at home." And as she spoke she turned again to the door, "I say driver, you just get that trunk lifted in, there's a good fellow, and see you don't turn it bottom upwards, my man, or I vow I won't give you a sixpence—do you hear?"

The driver grinned and proceeded to pull down the trunk, whilst Penelope Watson stood at his elbow, and flourished an umbrella in her hand, very much as if she meant to enforce her threats with blows.

When satisfied, however, with the care

which he took of her property, she had paid and dismissed him, she turned to her sisters, exclaiming:

"There, now you may bundle off too, as fast as you please, my bonnet and gown and all are in that trunk, and you shall not see them till I put them on, lest you should try and copy them."

"How very ill-natured," cried Margaret.

"No, it isn't, what becomes me would never suit you, so I only prevent you making a fright of yourself. Where's Emma? I want to see her."

"Here I am," said she timidly advancing, for Penelope's loud voice quite overpowered her courage.

"Here I am," mimicked Penelope, advancing towards her, "and how does your little ladyship do, pray? Why are you so long coming to welcome your new sister? I am sure you ought to have learnt more affection from Margaret."

Emma did not know what to answer to this attack, but looked at Elizabeth rather distressed.

"Never mind, Penelope," replied Miss Watson to her look, "she always says what she pleases; well, Margaret is waiting in

the chaise, so I must go; Emma, will you take Pen to my father?"

And Elizabeth hastened away as she spoke.

Penelope turned to her remaining sister, and surveyed her from head to foot—

"Well," said she, "I suppose I had better go and report myself first, and then I can settle about my things; upon my word, Emma, you are very pretty, I am so glad you have dark hair and eyes; Margaret makes me quite sick of fair skins, by her nonsense about her own. "Here I am, sir," cried she, advancing into her father's room as she spoke, "come to waken you all up; I am sure the old house looks as if it had gone to sleep since I went away, and there is the same fly on the window, I protest, as when I was last in the room. How do you do, my dear sir?"

"None the better for all the confounded clatter you have been making in the hall, I can tell you; I thought you had brought home a dozen children at your heels, judging from the uproar you created. What mad freak has possessed you now, Penelope?"

"Oh! I came for two things—one was to go to the Osborne Castle ball—the other I'll tell you by-and-bye."

"You are always racing over the country, and bent on having your own way, I know."

"So is every one; but they don't all know how to get it, so well as I do; but I see I'm disturbing you, so I shall go and unpack my rattle-traps—Emma come with me."

Emma seemed to obey instinctively—but she felt no pleasure in accompanying her sister. Her voice, look and manner, were alike uninviting, and she felt inclined to shrink from her. Penelope went to the parlour, and stirring the fire, drew in a chair close to the chimney—placed her feet upon the fender, and then turning abruptly round to her sister, said—

"So it is all your doing, is it, our going to the castle balls; it is really something new—Margaret wrote me word you and Miss Osborne were bosom friends?"

Emma coloured, but did not know what to say in reply.

"How sheepish you look, Emma," cried her sister, "one would think you were ashamed of it all; I am sure I think it vastly clever of you to get up a friendship with Miss Osborne, or a flirtation with her brother. I've a great respect for girls who know how to push their way and make the

most of circumstances. What sort of young fellow is Lord Osborne?'

"Plain and quiet," replied Emma.

"As if I did not know *that*," cried Penelope, "why, I've seen him hundreds of time, child; almost before you were born. I mean is he pleasant?—can he talk nonsense?—does he know how to make himself agreeable?"

"That must depend upon taste," replied Emma, "he never was particularly pleasant to me; and, as to his talking, it's neither good sense, nor good nonsense."

"Do you know what good nonsense is, Emma?" cried Penelope, "Why, then, I dare say you may not be quite detestable."

"I should hope not," said Emma, trying to smile.

"I thought your uncle might, perhaps, have made a Methodist of you, and that would not have suited me. Those musty old doctors of divinity have, sometimes, queer notions."

"I must beg, Penelope, when you mention my late uncle, you will do so with respect," said Emma, with spirit.

Penelope looked surprised—and, for a moment, was silent; when next she spoke

it was to question Emma minutely, as to the quality, price and texture of her dress, for the important day and night in prospect.

"I expect Margaret will be ready to expire with envy, when she sees the real Indian muslin that I mean to wear," pursued she, in a tone of great satisfaction; "I am not going to tell you how I came by it—for that's a great secret for some days to come. Is not Margaret horridly jealous?"

Emma looked shocked.

"Oh, I see!" laughed Penelope, "you are too good to abuse a sister—quite a Miss Charity or Miss Meek of a good little girl's prize book. But, if you like to sit like a goose weighing every word you are about to utter, I can tell you that does not suit me at all. I always say what comes into my head, without caring for anybody."

As Emma, however, did not follow the same method, she did not express how very unpleasant a course she considered it; and the sisters did not quarrel then.

"How has Margaret got on with Tom Musgrove?" continued Penelope, "by-the-bye, have you seen Tom Musgrove, yourself?"

"A little," said Emma.

"And how do you like him?—what do you think of him?—do you think he is in love with Margaret?" pursued Penelope.

"No," replied Emma, answering only to the last question.

"Nor do I; I don't see that he is at all more in love with her, than he has been with twenty other girls—myself included. But it's very good fun talking to him when he is in spirits. Emma can you keep a secret?"

"Yes, I hope so, when necessary; but I would rather have none to keep."

"How absurd—why, it's the best fun possible, to have a good secret; I would tell you one, if you would promise not to betray it."

"I shall be very happy to hear anything you like to tell me, and, I dare say you would not ask me to do anything wrong."

"Wrong! why, are you such a little Methodist, as to consider whether every thing is wrong—it's my own affair, and how can there be anything wrong in my telling you if I like? If one always stops to meditate whether any one would think a thing wrong, one might give over talking altogether."

Emma was silent from not very well knowing what to say in reply; and, after a momentary pause, Penelope went on:

"Now, the only reason I want you not to tell is, because I wish to surprise all the others by the news some day. You will promise not to mention it!"

"You had much better not tell me at all, Penelope; because then, your secret will certainly be safe," said Emma, good-humoredly; "if you, who are interested in it, cannot resist telling it—how can you expect me to be proof to such a temptation?"

"You are very much mistaken," said Penelope, angrily tossing her head, "if you suppose I cannot resist telling any thing I wish to keep secret; I assure you, I am quite as discreet, when occasion requires, as your little ladyship can be, though I do not set up to be so superior to all my family, and give myself airs of discretion and superfine prudence."

Emma saw she had made her sister angry—though she did know exactly how or why, and she attempted, but vainly, to apologise for the involuntary offence. Penelope was not to be propitiated.

"I can tell you, Miss Emma, it's no use at all, your trying to be so grand and indifferent; it was not a trifling mark of

my regard, what I was going to tell you, but, if you do not wish to hear it, you may let it alone. I dare say, Margaret will shew more interest in my concerns; I can tell her some day."

And with these words, Penelope rose and hastily quitted the room, slamming the door after her with all her might.

During the three succeeding days there was every possible opportunity taken by her to display to Emma the superior confidence with which Margaret was treated. Slips of paper were continually thrown across the table, containing mysterious words or incomprehensible signs. There was whispering too in corners, and talking with their fingers; hints were thrown out, which convulsed Margaret with laughing, but in which the uninitiated could see no joke; and every means taken to raise a curiosity which would have flattered Pen's self-importance. Elizabeth and Emma bore this infliction with remarkable heroism—having a strong internal conviction that a secret which required so much exertion to give it importance could not be much worth knowing, or that it would soon certainly become public.

Affairs were in this state when the important day, which had already excited

such intense speculation or anticipation in the minds of the four sisters. Emma's toilette was very satisfactory to herself in its results, she hoped she should not be the plainest or worst dressed person in the room, and she certainly took especial care to arrange her hair in a way that she had reason to think Mr. Howard admired.

Duly were they transported to the scene of such great anticipations, and when they had sufficiently arranged their dresses and shaken out the creases, after being so very much squeezed, they were marshalled up the grand staircase into the state-apartment.

It was worth while to watch Margaret's countenance, when, for the first time, contemplating the rich furniture and evidences of wealth which surrounded her. An overpowering sense of her own insignificance, and a conviction, that amidst so much that was rich, beautiful, and costly, her own elaborate toilette would pass unregarded, were the most prominent of her feelings. She could not resign herself to the idea of being one amongst the many unimportant individuals who contributed to form one whole and animated picture; she had flattered herself with the idea that she should be quite distinguished; she had fancied that

because her dress was the most elegant she had ever worn, it would be equally superior to those of the other visitors. Suddenly she found her mistake. Around her, on every side, were gay groups dressed in a far more expensive style; jewels glittered, laces and Indian shawls, velvets and brocades rustled or waved before her eyes, and the discovery that, however superior to her usual style were her present habiliments, numbers present surpassed her in elegance, caused a bitter mortification to her vain mind. It was everywhere a scene of gay bustle: animated whispers, light laughter, finery and flirtation were on every side of her and her sisters, as they followed the stream of visitors ascending to the reception-rooms. There were few whom they knew by sight, none to speak to, amongst all the company; some who passed bestowed a stare, some put up their eye-glasses, and some their lips, as they saw the four sisters unattended by any gentleman walking together. These were ladies: men when they looked once, looked again, for the whole family were good-looking, and Emma's beauty could not fail to attract when once observed. But looks did not satisfy Margaret or Penelope, who both wanted to be conspicuous characters, envied every woman

accompanied or addressed by a man, and felt extremely ill-used by everything around them.

After passing through several state-apartments, where they followed in the wake of many others, they arrived at the entrance of the music saloon, where they at last encountered Miss Osborne and her mother. The latter curtsied, and then turned to some one else; the former broke off a conversation with some young people round her, to offer her hand to Elizabeth and her youngest sister, to whom she expressed much pleasure at the meeting; and said a few civil words to the two others, when Miss Watson named them. Both Elizabeth and Emma were satisfied with their reception, and would have been glad to find quiet seats from which they might survey the company, and thus secure all the share in the amusement that they felt they had a right to expect. But the others were not so easily satisfied. They wanted to keep close to Miss Osborne, hoping for the distinction of further notice, and they both declared that they had no idea of being wedged into a corner where nobody could see them. To avoid attracting attention by their angry whispers, their sisters were obliged to comply, though they both felt uncomfortable at

parading the rooms without any chaperone or gentleman to escort them, and yet did not like to attach themselves to Miss Osborne, lest she should think so large a body of followers troublesome.

Passing once more down one of the drawing-rooms, they for the first time perceived an acquaintance. This was Tom Musgrove, who was in the act of escorting a party of fashionable-looking ladies, and either did not, or would not see them. To pass him unobserved, however, suited neither Pen nor Margaret, and the latter having failed to catch his eye, the former pulled his elbow to make him look at them. Emma turned blushing away, quite ashamed of the free manner of her sister's address.

His attention thus arrested, he could not avoid speaking—but his bow was as short and hurried as it was possible, and he would again have turned to his party had Penelope or Margaret allowed it. But this they would not do.

“Bless me, Tom,” cried the elder sister; “how many ages it is since we met, and yet you seem not to have a word to bestow on an old friend.”

His party passed on as she spoke, and as soon as they were sufficiently far off for him

to be sure he should not be heard, he replied in a very short abrupt tone,

"I am much obliged for your notice, Miss Penelope, and vastly happy to see you, only just at present, as I am particularly engaged in escorting the daughters of Sir Anthony Barnard, I must beg you will excuse my further delay ; your humble servant, Miss Margaret," and he rushed away as he finished his sentence. -

"How provoking," muttered Penelope, "I declare, Tom Musgrove seems to have become a perfect bear since I went away."

"I wish our father was a baronet or a lord," sighed Margaret, "then he would care for us too."

"Then I am sure I should not care for him," cried Elizabeth, with much spirit; "who would value attentions dependent on such a circumstance?"

They now stood still, and seemed quite at a loss what to do, when a voice at Emma's ear made her start, and sent all the blood thrilling through her veins. The individual on whom her thoughts were fixed, he whose presence and attention were most certain of making her feel at ease—Mr. Howard, in short, was beside her.

His eager enquiries as to whether she had

met Lady Osborne—whether she was pleased with what she saw, gave her satisfaction ; but his proposal that they should join his sister, who was in the music saloon, and was looking out for them, was the greatest relief imaginable.

The awkwardness of feeling, from which she had been suffering, was at once done away ; they would belong to some one—they would have some one to address them—some one to make them feel at home and comfortable.

Mrs. Willis was good-humoured and agreeable as ever—receiving the two strangers cordially, for the sake of their sisters, and immediately proposing that she should act as their chaperone at the ball in the evening.

To this, not even Margaret could make an objection, and Emma, with Mr. Howard by her side, was now really happy. The happiness, however, was not of very long duration ; scarcely had she been seated five minutes, when she perceived Lady Osborne's eye-glass turned in their direction—and a moment after, a young man, who stood near her, and to whom she evidently addressed some words, approached and said,

“ Howard, you are wanted—her ladyship finds your assistance and presence indispen-

sable—but, before you go, I pray you to bequeath to me your seat.”

With evident reluctance—Emma’s only consolation, he rose, and turning to her said—

“ Since, I must leave you—will you allow me to present to you my friend, Sir William Gordon—but, remember, Gordon,” he added, laughing, “ I shall expect my proxy to resign in my favour, the moment I return to claim the situation.”

“ Don’t build too much upon that,” cried the young Sir William, whose gay, animated countenance, would certainly have preposessed Emma in his favour, had he not turned out Mr. Howard.

In spite, however, of his lively address, her eyes followed the other gentleman; and she perceived that Lady Osborne, after some conversation with him, sent him to fetch some young ladies from the other side of the room; and, after a good deal of bustle and change, succeeded in locating him in a corner close to herself. It was vain to watch longer, there seemed not the slightest prospect of a release for him: and, fearful lest her looks should attract notice or betray her feelings, she endeavoured to confine her attention to what was immediately around her. The music had not yet com-

menced, and there was neither opportunity nor inclination wanting on the part of her neighbour to amuse her with conversation.

"Have you been often at the castle?" enquired he, presently; "I do not remember to have seen you here; yet I think I should have noticed your face, had we met before."

Emma informed him that she was a comparative stranger in the neighbourhood, and had rarely been at Osborne Castle.

"Then are you sure that you are aware of the state of family politics? Are you conversant with the position of parties in the establishment?"

"On the contrary, I am quite ignorant—possessing no knowledge, and little curiosity."

"Oh, impossible! all women are curious, more or less. You must wish to have a peep behind the scenes."

"I deny it."

"But it is necessary that you should, or you will transgress again."

"Again!" said Emma, a little alarmed; "have I done so already then?"

"Certainly," replied Sir William gravely, "were you not guilty of detaining Mr. Howard by your side, when her ladyship needed him?"

"Indeed, no! he went directly she sent for him," said she, coloring.

"To send, should have been on her part, superfluous; to go on his, impossible; he should, instinctively, have sought her side, and placed himself in her service."

"Surely not—Mr. Howard is not the individual of highest rank, and could not, therefore, rightly, appropriate such a situation; and he is a free agent, and has, surely, the power of choice."

"He has, no doubt, every thing to guide him. I cannot doubt of his having taste, judgment, discernment, sense; his choice cannot be questioned in some respects—but, if he intends to please her ladyship, he must prove his admiration for the mature charms of forty five, not the blooming graces—but, I am growing personal and particular, I forbear lest I should offend!"

Emma looked a little puzzled.

"Howard is *my* intimate friend," added Sir William, "and I really wish him well; now, do not you think he had better marry the dowager."

"It is a point which no one can presume to decide for him," said Emma, struggling with certain painful recollections.

"After all," added he, "there is no such

disparity in their years—only fifteen or thereabouts—the jointure might be sometime in his possession.”

“I should really be obliged, if you would find some other subject of conversation, Sir William,” replied Emma, decidedly, “I do not think it good taste to criticise our hostess.”

“Suppose we talk of her daughter, then?” replied he, quietly, “don’t you think her rather over-dressed?”

“No,” said Emma, “but I think you had better let the whole family alone.”

“I think I will follow your advice and choose another subject—what shall it be?—shall we talk of yourself? Confide to me all your peculiar tastes—your wonderful aversions—your never dying friendships. How many bosom friends have you, Miss Watson?”

“None, except my sister,” said Emma, amused.

“Your sister! oh, fie! no one thinks of making a friend of a sister—that is quite a burlesque—a friend’s brother is, of course, a favorite—but one’s own brothers or sisters are quite out of the question.”

“Well, then, I am badly off indeed, for I have no friend.”

"Indeed! I wish you would take me as one."

Emma shook her head.

"I assure you, I am very modest, I should make an excellent friend; only try me."

She answered only by an incredulous look.

"Here comes Lord Osborne into the room," continued he, "looking as if he were going to be hanged. Just turn your eyes this way, Miss Watson."

"Thank you," replied Emma, without complying; "but I will not add to Lord Osborne's modest confusion by looking at him."

"His modest confusion—what a good idea. Why he is the most impudent man in Great Britain. What bribe do you suppose his mother had to offer him, to induce him to come into the music saloon to-day?"

"It is difficult for me to guess. Agreeable company and excellent music no doubt."

"I cannot fancy either would gratify him; he is certainly one of the most unpolished boors in the county. I assure you his groom is a gentleman compared to him."

"For shame to say such things of your host—you are taking away his character, and there is surely some penalty attached to stealing in a dwelling-house."

"You are quite mistaken, I am doing just the reverse—giving him a character, out of the superfluity of my own. But now just look at him, he is making his way up to his mama—what would you bet that he does not tread on six ladies' toes before he crosses the room?"

Emma could not help smiling, but would not turn round, as she had no inclination to catch the young peer's eyes.

"Oh, it's not Lady Osborne, it's Howard he is addressing. I wonder what he is saying. Howard's countenance is a tell-tale, and it's something he does not like. Now they are both looking this way; upon my word his lordship is coming here. Do you think he is trying to find *me*, Miss Watson? Really such public notice confuses me—I am so very modest—am not I blushing now?"

Emma could not raise her eyes, for she was conscious that whether Sir William's blushes were real or fanciful, her own were painfully deep, and that he observed it. It was not however as Sir William supposed, because Lord Osborne was coming towards

her, but it was the idea that Mr. Howard pointed out her seat with reluctance, joined to the arch tone and look of her companion that destroyed her composure, in spite of her utmost efforts to appear calm.

"You are acquainted with Lord Osborne, then?" said he, as if drawing an inference from something just passing.

"What makes you think so?" said she.

"I judge from your being so well aware that he is not worth looking at; had you never seen him, you would certainly have expected something superior. Shall I vacate my place in favor of his lordship?"

"As you please. It is a perfect matter of indifference to me: don't do it on my account however."

"What a perplexing answer; I don't know how to understand it; for though well aware that a lady's private opinion is usually the reverse of her public one, I am still left in the dark as to which of us you really prefer."

All this conversation passed in whispers during the bustle of arrangement, and previous to the commencement of the overture; but now the full burst of the orchestra drowned all other sounds, and made a reply from Emma unnecessary.

The silence which followed between them

proved a relief to her, and thinking that her companion's attention was engrossed by some other object, she stole a glance towards the spot occupied by Lady Osborne's party. There sat her ladyship in state, and close beside her stood Mr. Howard: he was stooping to listen with a smile to some observation of his patroness, and the painful idea crossed her mind that perhaps after all *they* were right who suggested the possibility of an alliance between them. She could not imagine that he loved the dowager, but it was very possible that ambition, the desire of independence, vanity, or some other motive might influence him; and as to her ladyship, she must have given some ground for a conjecture so universally whispered.

A year ago, had she then known the parties, such an idea would have been rejected as absurd; but her aunt's marriage had given a shock to her feelings which seemed to destroy her confidence both in men and women, especially in middle-aged widows with large jointures. It was true that if Mr. Howard's character were such as she supposed, he would be uninfluenced by such a consideration, but in this she might be mistaken, and where such a possibility of mistake existed, it became her not to risk her own happiness by encouraging the feel-

ing of partiality for him, which she was conscious had been growing since the commencement of their acquaintance. She made the most heroic resolutions, determining henceforth to keep as much as possible out of his company, and do everything in her power to restore her mind to a state of equanimity. She resolved therefore not to look again, but studiously to avert her eyes, and she tried hard to fix them on the orchestra, and to forget, in listening to the music, all other considerations. She was interrupted by the sudden address of Lord Osborne, who having at length worked his way up to her, exclaimed,

"I have been trying to get to you this half hour, Miss Watson, but those fellows with their music make such a confounded row, there is no knowing what one is doing here."

There was nothing in Emma's calm and collected reception of him to encourage the notion of partiality on her part which Sir William Gordon had entertained. It was polite, but as far removed from the flutter of a gratified vanity as from the consciousness of a growing attachment.

"I wish you would make room for me to sit down," he said presently. "Gordon, I think you have been here quite long enough

—go and make love to Miss Carr and you will be doing a double charity.”

“As how, my lord?” said Sir William without moving an inch.

“By giving her something to do, and leaving a seat for me here.”

“Thank you, but in good truth I am not equal to the undertaking which your lordship has just so successfully performed. I could not make my way across such a room, and must pray your leave to remain in the modest seclusion of this corner, as best suited to my humble capacities.”

“You abominably selfish fellow, you have the best seat in the room, and you know it—that’s all.”

Sir William bowed.

“Then your lordship can hardly expect me to give it up; possession you know is everything.”

“I can make room for your lordship,” cried Margaret who had long been straining forward her head to try and catch his attention. She was seated behind Emma and Elizabeth, by the side of Mrs Willis.

Lord Osborne just turned his head and gave her a momentary glance, then stooping towards Emma, enquired who was that thin girl behind her.

She informed him it was her sister.

"Indeed!" cried he; "I should never have guessed that—she is not a bit like you!"

At this moment a favorable movement was effected by Penelope, who had been seated at the extreme end of the form. Seeing the advantage of attaching Lord Osborne to their party, and too wise to expect to do so by superseding Emma, which seemed to be Margaret's idea, she quietly removed, and placing herself by Mrs. Willis, left a vacant seat.

He immediately requested Elizabeth to make room for him, and in another moment he was established by Emma's side, in the long desired position.

"What a remarkably good-natured girl," observed he in a whisper: "who is she?"

"Another sister, my lord."

"Another sister! Why in the name of Heaven, how many sisters have you in the room?"

"Only three."

"Only three! And how many others have you?"

Emma assured him that was all.

"Well but three is too many," replied he gravely; "it must be very awkward and disagreeable having so many—don't you find it so?"

"I never looked upon it in that light, which is fortunate, perhaps, as I see no remedy."

"That's true—you have them and cannot help it; but that does not make it less of an evil—one would not choose three sisters."

Emma did not think it necessary to reply to this speech.

"Then your father has four daughters?" continued he, as if the result of profound calculation on his part.

"Your arithmetic is quite correct, my lord," replied she, smiling a little.

"And how many sons are there?"

"Two only."

"That makes six children in all—what a family. It's a great draw-back certainly."

"It does not make me unhappy at all."

"That must be because you are so very good-tempered. I am not sure that I could bear it myself."

"It is fortunate that you will not probably be called on to support such an infiction!"

"Unless I were to marry a woman who had a good many brothers and sisters."

"It will be your own fault if you do

that, and with so strong a prejudice against them, I should certainly advise you not."

A long pause ensued, during which every one seemed occupied with the singing, and when, at the close of the first act, there was an opportunity again afforded for conversation, Emma's attention was claimed by Miss Osborne, who made her way up to her, and offering her arm, led her into another saloon, as she said, to enjoy a little chat with her.

"How do you find Sir William Gordon?" enquired she, presently, turning away her face as she spoke, to examine some flowers near her.

"He seems chatty and pleasant," replied Emma; "but I have hardly seen enough to form a serious idea of him."

"Are you engaged to Mr. Howard for the first dance?"

"No, I have hardly seen him this afternoon," replied Emma, in her turn trying to conceal her countenance.

"That's unlucky; I wish he had asked you," observed Miss Osborne, thoughtfully.

"Thank you; but I dare say he would have done so, had he wished it; and I have no claim on him, more than any one else," replied Emma, rather proudly.

Miss Osborne looked rather quickly at her. Her eyes were particularly piercing, and she seemed to read Emma's thoughts in her face. This scrutiny somewhat distressed her companion, and she was much relieved by the approach of Lord Osborne and Sir William Gordon, who joined them, with a request that they would return to the music saloon as the performance would soon be beginning.

"Nonsense," replied Miss Osborne, "there can be no occasion to hurry—and I do not care about the first piece—it's so pleasant here—sit down again, please, Miss Watson, and, Osborne, you keep quiet."

Emma complied—the room was cool and agreeable, and she was out of sight of Mr. Howard, and therefore less annoyed than when a witness to Lady Osborne's attentions to him. Miss Osborne had a fancy for some refreshment, and sent Sir William for a glass of jelly, desiring him to select the one he thought best. Sir William insisted that her brother should accompany him to bring something for Emma, with which he complied, although his sister offered to lay any wager that he would spill it before reaching them.

"I assure you," she continued, to her companion, "he is the most awkward

creature in the world, though, I own, a very good-natured one. I would not trust him to carry a jelly or a cream on any account, where I had much regard for the carpet."

The gentlemen soon re-appeared, each bearing something in his hands; but Miss Osborne's prophecy happened to be amply fulfilled: just as her brother was stooping to present to Emma a glass of whipped cream, he stumbled over a footstool, and laid the whole contents in her lap.

Up jumped Miss Osborne in great dismay and tribulation, and poured forth the most vague apologies, her brother being far too shocked to speak at all. Emma begged her not to be concerned, it really was so entirely an accident that there could be no blame attached to any one. Nothing could exceed the good-humour with which she bore the injury to her dress, or her desire to restore Lord Osborne to his former equanimity.

"The dress will be totally spoilt," observed Miss Osborne, sorrowfully—"and such a pretty one, what a pity: what can I do for you?"

Sir William suggested that Miss Watson should immediately try some remedy, for

removing the stain ; perhaps Miss Osborne's own woman could afford her means of relief—at all events, it was better to make use of any method that could be effected as speedily as possible, since delay would certainly increase the evil. Adopting his advice, Miss Osborne hurried her young friend away, expressing the most sincere regrets at the accident, both as regarded spoiling her gown, and interrupting her amusement.

Emma did not attempt to deny that she was sorry for her pretty dress ; but she made the admission with so much good humour, and with so evident a desire of excusing Lord Osborne, that her companion was perfectly delighted with her.

An accurate investigation up-stairs, proved that the unfortunate gown was ruined almost beyond hope of remedy ; and Miss Osborne suggested that she should put on one of her own, as a substitute, as they were so nearly of a size that it was certain to fit well. Her whole wardrobe was placed at Emma's disposal, and she was soon re-equipped, and ready to descend to the company again, whilst the injured dress was submitted to the inspection of a committee of waiting women, who were to take any possible measures for its repara-

tion. But as Miss Osborne took this opportunity of adjusting her toilette for the evening, so much time was expended upstairs, that the concert was over before they returned to the music-room, and they found the company separated into groups, some slowly parading through the different apartments—some enjoying the collation in the refreshment-room—whilst some had disappeared to prepare their dresses for the ball.

Sir William Gordon joined them almost immediately, with enquiries as to the nature and extent of the injuries inflicted, and an assurance that the culprit had retreated, being afraid once more to face Miss Watson. Emma expressed such very simple and sincere regret that he should be distressed, that Sir William volunteered to carry to him the news of her entire forgiveness, and her friendly disposition. But Miss Osborne did not seem disposed to part with him on such an errand. Detaining Emma's arm, she engaged Sir William in a lively conversation, and it seemed evident that her desire to ascertain the nature of Emma's feelings towards Sir William arose from the fact that her own were rather warmly in his favour. He was amusing, and rather clever, and Emma enjoyed listening to him.

Her attention was diverted by the approach of her sisters, and she was immediately called on to explain the change in her dress which, of course, attracted their eyes. This she did by merely relating that her gown had met with an accident, and that Miss Osborne had been so kind as to lend her another.

Now that they were standing under the immediate patronage of Miss Osborne, Tom Musgrove thought proper to approach and join them. Emma, of course, was his object, not only on her own account, but because her arm was linked in that of the honorable Miss Osborne.

"How rejoiced I am to see you looking so well, Miss Emma Watson?" cried he. "Winston must certainly agree remarkably well with you ; but it is a most unexpected pleasure to meet you under this noble roof ; it is the first time I have had that satisfaction."

Emma calmly admitted the fact.

"On what a magnificent scale our noble hostess entertains," continued he, "there is not such hospitality exercised in any other mansion where I visit. Does it not remind you of the old feudal times, when fair ladies held th ir court, and knights

and squires vied with one another for their bright smiles."

"I wish you would go and see for my brother, Mr. Musgrove," said Miss Osborne, looking quickly round.

Tom bowed low and obsequiously.

"Can you tell me where I shall find his lordship?" enquired he.

"No, indeed; you must just have the goodness to search till you find him—from the turret to the cellar; from the library to the stable; including the dog-kennel—it is impossible to say where he may be."

"I obey your gracious commands with the precipitation naturally your due," cried he, bowing again, but not moving; in fact, he was too much delighted to speak to the young lady at all, to be in any hurry to conclude the interview.

"Don't put yourself out of breath in the chace," said Sir William. "I am sure Miss Osborne will not require that of you. Take your time, and look carefully, for I suspect much he is artfully hidden from sight."

He tried once more to secure further orders from Miss Osborne; but she would not look round again, and he was forced to console himself by wandering over the re-

ception rooms, and enquiring of every acquaintance if they could tell him where "Osborne" was, as he was sent by Miss Osborne to find him.

"How I detest that chattering magpie of a man," cried Miss Osborne as soon as he was out of hearing, "I hope he is no friend of yours, Miss Watson?" appealing to Emma, "I have been told that some women admire him prodigiously."

"I do not," replied Emma.

"I am glad of that; he is just the sort of person I thoroughly despise. He has not an opinion of his own, and is as mischievous as he is idle and vain."

"Upon my word, Miss Osborne," cried Sir William, "if you express such very strong opinions, you will frighten me out of your company. If you treat Tom Musgrove with such severity, I wonder what character you would give to me?"

"You! Sir William, I make no scruple in telling you how vain, disagreeable, and idle you are. What else can you expect me to say? Do not you waste your days in fox hunting and coursing; your nights in drinking or flirting? are you not well known as the worst master, the worst landlord, the worst magistrate, the worst member in the county? Your misdeeds are

notorious; do you not pull down schools, and destroy churches? did I not hear of a fire on your estate where much damage was done—were you not supposed to be deeply concerned in that?"

"I pray your mercy, Miss Osborne; do not enumerate any more of my misdeeds, or you will indeed drive me away. Such public censure is more than I can stand."

Miss Osborne now proposed that they should adjourn to the room where the collation was spread, as she protested the anxiety of mind she had undergone had given her a prodigious appetite, and she thought she could eat an ice or a cream, with at least two-thirds of a *wafer*.

After a search of half an hour, Tom Musgrove was successful in discovering the owner of the mansion, and when he learnt that Emma Watson was with his sister, he consented to return to her. He looked rather ashamed of himself as he approached the ladies, but still he ventured on; his first glance was at Emma's gown, and seeing no stain upon it, and never discovering that the dress itself had been changed, he looked much relieved, and ventured to whisper:

"I am so very sorry for my misfortune, but I assure you I never intended it."

Emma warmly assured him that she was

incapable of supposing such a thing for a moment. He exclaimed at her extreme good-nature, protesting that he should never forget it; then looking down at her dress, observed that he did not think it was hurt by it. Emma was diverted at his entire want of suspicion that it was another gown she wore, and would not distress him by telling him of the change; his solicitude that she should have what was *nice*, and his care to prevent another catastrophe were most praiseworthy, and amused her till a summons came from Lady Osborne to her daughter, announcing that they were waiting for her to open the ball.

To the ball-room accordingly they all proceeded, Lord Osborne still keeping close to Emma, in such a way as to lead to the natural conclusion amongst the spectators, that they were going to dance together. This did not seem to be his intention, as he presently asked her who she was going to dance with. She told him in reply that she was disengaged; and she internally fancied that he was about to propose himself as her partner, an honor which she did not desire. But when she found this was not the case, and that he was quite contented with thinking somebody must

soon ask her, she certainly felt a little disappointed, and rather annoyed fancying that he wished to prevent her dancing at all. Miss Osborne had taken pains to procure partners for her sisters, knowing that they had but few acquaintances in the room, and Emma thought it strange she should take no notice of her. A few words she whispered to her brother, to which he replied by a nod; and then she too disappeared amongst a group, and left her standing by her extraordinary and taciturn admirer. She began to feel rather strange and uncomfortable, and to wish herself quietly in a corner out of sight, or with Mrs. Willis, whom she could not discover; anywhere in fact but in a conspicuous station in the ball-room, with none near her whom she knew, except their host.

At length she took courage to say that as they would probably be in the way where they now stood, she should be glad to find Mrs. Willis, and sit with her. Before Lord Osborne had time to reply, the lady they were speaking of appeared accompanied by her brother.

Emma's surprise was very great when his lordship exclaimed:

"Oh, Howard, I'm monstrous glad you're

come. You shall dance with Miss Emma Watson, I've been trying to get her a partner for this great while."

Mr. Howard who had but recently escaped from the attentions required of him by Lady Osborne, and who had been searching for Emma with this very intention, felt all his expectation of pleasure die away at the sight of the young couple standing together. He knew enough of his pupil to be aware of the extraordinary interest he must take in his companion even to think of procuring her a partner, and he could hardly suppose that she would be quite undazzled by the devotion which was thus testified by a young nobleman. It was therefore with a grave though civil air that he took up the request that Lord Osborne had dictated, and solicited the honor of her hand.

To refuse was out of the question, and yet she could not bear to accept what seemed so unwillingly proffered. She thought he disliked the proposition; he concluded she was disappointed in not having the young baron for her partner; this feeling produced on each side a natural coldness of manner, very unfavorable to securing an agreeable dance. She could think of nothing to say which would serve

to introduce the topic of her thoughts, though she was longing to explain how uncomfortable she had felt, whilst standing apart with Lord Osborne; and he seemed to be labouring under a total absence of all ideas whatever, in the least productive of conversation. Their dance was as different as possible from that of the happy evening when they had first stood up together, and in spite of her philosophic resolutions to cultivate indifference towards him, she could not get over her regret at his manner. It was over at last, and whilst trying to find her party she encountered Miss Osborne and her brother. The former immediately addressed her with a hope that she had enjoyed the dance, but before she had time to reply, with the most astonishing quickness Lord Osborne answered:

"I am sure she did not, Rosa, for both she and Howard looked as if they were following a funeral, and scarcely spoke a word to each other."

The lady and gentleman were both rather put out of countenance at this accusation, and Miss Osborne looking archly at Emma, said:

"Why what's the matter—have you been quarrelling, my dear friend?"

Emma only answered by blushing still

more deeply; and Lord Osborne, who appeared seized with the spirit of communicativeness just at the wrong moment, continued:

"Next time you send her a partner, Rosa, I hope he will be more to her mind," from which sentence Emma conjectured that it was to Miss Osborne's intervention that she was indebted for Mr. Howard's appearance.

In another moment she was still more surprised by Lord Osborne suggesting:

"Suppose you were to dance with me, Miss Watson, and see whether I could not be agreeable; only, Rosa, you must call a very easy dance, for I shall not be able to get through an intricate one."

Miss Osborne looked rather surprised at this extraordinary exertion on her brother's part; Mr. Howard turned away. Just at this moment Tom Musgrove approached again, and Lord Osborne instantly addressing him, desired he would go and ask that good-natured Miss Watson to dance, as he felt particularly obliged to her. It would have amused a spectator to watch his countenance on receiving this command: he could not make up his mind to disobey; indeed as he found the whole family so much in favor at the Castle, he intended

to take them under his patronage likewise, but he wished to *dance* only with Emma, and had come to seek her for that purpose. After a moment's hesitation he turned to her, and affecting to believe she was the one intended, requested the honor of her hand, in compliance equally with his own wishes and his noble friend's commands. His noble friend, however, was by no means inclined to cede his prior claim on her hand in favor of Mr. Musgrove, but plainly told him that the Miss Watson whom he was to ask was an elder one, who had been very good-natured when he wanted a seat. Since he could not dance with Miss Osborne, who was likewise engaged, Tom thought the next thing must be to take the sister of Lord Osborne's partner, and he accordingly went to find the young lady whose good nature had made so deep an impression on that nobleman. But Penelope was engaged, and he, desirous of obeying the orders he had received so far as he could, but preferring Margaret to her sister, was very glad on this occasion to ask her to dance with him.

Margaret received him in a flutter of gratified vanity and delight, which displayed itself in her looks and actions; it was such a very unexpected compliment, that she felt

certain that his affections were once more returning to her—and that, before long, he would become her avowed admirer.

Emma's dance was little more lively than her last; Lord Osborne was so very much occupied in keeping his feet in time, and giving the proper hand at the proper moment, to his *vis-a-vis*, that he had no faculties to spare for engaging in conversation. She saw Mr. Howard did not dance and more than once she met his eyes fixed on her with a look which she could not understand. It was not dislike or disapproval that his countenance expressed—she would rather have described it as depicting concern and a friendly interest—as if he were gifted with second sight, and foresaw for her some great misfortune. She tried to avoid looking at him, and was provoked with herself for thinking so much about his looks and manners, in spite of her repeatedly formed resolutions to the contrary.

At the conclusion of this dance, there was a general movement to the supper-room, and Emma found herself escorted there by her late partner, rather to her own astonishment, as she could not help feeling that her place should have been occupied by some one of the more distinguished guests. Indeed she fancied, for a moment,

that both his mother and sister looked a little annoyed at his selection. She was quite separated from all her own family, except Margaret, who, with the assistance of Tom Musgrove, was placed nearly opposite to them—and who was now, in a peculiarly happy state of spirits. In fact, Emma saw, with some little surprise, that they were carrying on a very lively flirtation—which, as the excellent champagne took effect on his head, became every moment more tender on his part.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON rising from supper, Miss Osborne again passed her arm under Emma's, and led her out of the room : complaining that she was tired and heated, she proposed adjourning to the conservatory, where, by the light of beautiful lamps amidst the murmur of a fountain, the delicious odour of flowers, and the chequered glimpses of a bright wintry moon playing on the blossoms and shrubs, they sauntered in silence. At the end of the conservatory was an alcove fitted up with sofas, and almost concealed from observation by a row of orange trees, whose beautiful blossoms perfumed the air. Into this recess Miss Osborne conducted her

friend—and here they had been sitting only a few minutes when they heard voices approaching.

After reconnoitring through the boughs, Miss Osborne softly whispered,

“It’s only your sister and Mr. Musgrove—sit still, or we shall be plagued with his company.”

Trusting that they would not loiter long, the two young ladies remained concealed; and, in another moment, the couple approached so close as to enable them distinctly to hear what they said.

Margaret was speaking.

“But you need not envy us, I assure you, Mr. Musgrove, we, poor, weak woman, who have no defence from slander—no pity for the deep heart-wounds we are ever compelled to bear in silence; oh! I assure you, if, as you say, we are like angels, our lot is any thing but angelic.”

“But women have so much more—I mean to say they are so much less—that is, you know, they have not any thing at all?”

He did not seem quite aware of what he did mean; and Miss Osborne’s looks expressed a degree of amusement that threatened the security of their concealment.

She succeeded, however, in stifling her laughter, and catching up his words—

Margaret began again.

“So they have—you say very true—you mean, no doubt, they have more tenderness and less thought than you—but that increases our evils. We love and dare not shew it—and we smile whilst a dagger is placed in our hearts—and die happy, if, in dying, we can secure the peace of some beloved object,”

“What are these flowers, Miss Margaret?” said Tom, who evidently found it difficult to sustain his part in this very pathetic conversation.

“Do you not know they are orange blossoms—bridal ornaments?”

“Are they indeed?—and when do *you* mean to wear them?”

“How can you ask—is such an event in the disposal of woman?”

“Do you wish to wear them.”

“I shall not tell you—fie! how can you ask?”

“Nay, do not scold me for the deep interest I take in you.”

“You take an interest, indeed!” cried Margaret, laughing affectedly; “ah! I know you better.”

"If you doubt my word, you don't know me at all—tell me, is there one of all those men in that bright assembly, for whom you would put on those mystic blossoms?"

"None, upon my word," cried she, again; "none for whom I would consent to deck myself—none who could tempt me to such a sacrifice of life and liberty."

"Is that possible?" exclaimed he, in an incredulous tone.

"True, indeed; but why should you ask; you care not for me—you take no interest in me—you profess much indeed—but you are a man of professions."

"Cruel assertion—you cannot believe it possible. I assure you I have the most feeling heart in the world."

"I am incredulous."

"You are unkind."

"What motive have I to be otherwise to you."

"My deep and earnest devotion to you, fair Margaret."

"Now you are jesting, Mr. Musgrove."

"In professing my admiration—my attachment—impossible—by this fair hand,

I swear I love you beyond expression. Will you wear the orange blossoms for me?"

"Will I? ah! dearest Tom—you little know my heart if you doubt the willingness—but may I trust you?"

"I vow to you by the bright moon above us—by all the honor of my ancestors; by every thing that is dear to me, that you are the fairest, best, most amiable, lovely, perfect woman of my acquaintance."

"Ah! dearest Tom. I sadly fear you flatter me with your sweet words."

"Flatter you! you indulge in an idea derogatory to yourself, to me—some women I might flatter—some I have flattered—but not *you*—that is impossible—tell me, Margaret, do you love me."

"Doubt you my love? Can you question my feelings—would you probe my heart—ecstatic moment—bliss beyond conception. Tom, I am yours in life and death."

"You are mine and I am yours—but hush, there are voices coming—let us return to the dancing—"

With slow, and apparently, reluctant step, Margaret was drawn away; and, the moment they were out of hearing, Miss Osborne turned to her companion and

aroused her from the state of almost stupid astonishment, in which she was plunged, by commencing a rapid, but whispered apology, for having become unintentionally the confidante of her sister's happy prospects. She assured her it was entirely from a friendly feeling towards her, that she had sat silent—for she felt had they started out and put the lovers out of countenance by their appearance, the declaration would have been interrupted, the whole affair disarranged—and more mischief might have been perpetrated, than they would ever have hoped to repair.

At the same time she promised honorably to conceal the secret thus unintentionally come to her knowledge, until it was generally published, and she was able to present her congratulations to Miss Margaret. She did not think it necessary to add how singularly absurd she had thought both gentleman and lady on the occasion, or with how great a risk of choking her effort to suppress her laughter had been.

To Emma the sentences overheard had conveyed a sensation of illimitable wonder. That Tom Musgrove should have thought of marrying any woman, and especially Margaret, a girl with whom he had formerly flirted till he was tired, that he should really

be enough in love to marry her without money or connexions appeared almost miraculous. She was vexed that Miss Osborne should have overheard all the nonsense passing between them, for she could not help fearing, from the glance of her eye, that she would ridicule such affection and folly.

Then too she felt very doubtful as to her sister's happiness with a man whose present levity and idleness promised but ill for the future. Certainly Margaret loved him, but hers was a love which doubtless might have been transferred to some other object, and was but little likely to make her seriously unhappy.

All these thoughts passed through her mind whilst slowly accompanying her companion to the ball-room, where they neither sought nor saw the two whose conversation had so much interested her.

The evening to Emma had decidedly been one of more pain than pleasure; she was bitterly disappointed by the conduct and manners of Mr. Howard, and this interview, instead of increasing their acquaintance, or promoting their friendship, seemed to have ended only in finishing and strengthening that incomprehensible division be-

tween them which had once or twice before this surprised or alarmed her.

Regret at this circumstance combined with a feeling of lassitude and weariness, from not being accustomed to such late hours, sufficed to rob her movements, at first, of all spirit and grace during the next dance, and to take away all sprightliness from her conversation. Her partner, the lively Sir William Gordon, expressed a fear that she was ill, and proposed sitting down, but desirous not to attract attention, she asserted herself perfectly competent to continue the figure, and exerted herself more effectually to dispel his ideas, lest he should succeed in guessing the origin of her want of spirits. The effort was perfectly successful, and carefully smothering her own feelings, she allowed her partner to talk in his usual gay and careless style, and rewarded his conversation with smiles which encouraged him to proceed.

He ascertained that she was to remain at the Castle that night, and informed her that he was also to be an inmate for a few days, so that he had the satisfaction of knowing that he should have the opportunity of following up the acquaintance so happily begun, and that her appearance was

not only that of a dazzling meteor to shine across his path with rare brilliancy for a few minutes, and then leave him to darkness and despair for the future.

"No," said Emma; "I trust I have an orbit, though a small one, but too distant and remote a one from yours, Sir William, for it ever to be likely that our paths should cross again."

"You don't say so, Miss Watson; surely if Miss Osborne has discovered and learnt to appreciate your worth—your brilliancy—it is very possible for an inferior individual like me equally to keep you in sight."

"No," said Emma; "it requires Miss Osborne's abilities for that, and I am sure you cannot pretend to vie with her in that respect."

"Beyond all question, no," cried Sir William; "I have not such vanity or impertinence; have I not already informed you I am the most modest creature breathing?"

"Oh, yes," replied Emma smiling; "we settled that point so long ago that it had almost escaped my memory in the interval; but now you mention it, I do recollect that you said so before."

"You are too bad, Miss Watson," replied he laughing.

"I think you wrong me—you should say

too good, in thus readily allowing your claim to superior merit."

"Well, but now tell me, do you think Miss Osborne so very clever?"

"I must decline discussing that point, being incapable of forming a judgment on the subject."

"Am I to infer that you do not like me?" enquired he doubtfully.

"By no means—all I can allow you to infer from my silence is, that Miss Osborne has been, voluntarily, so very kind to me, that she deserves my gratitude, but that I have seen too little of her to warrant my forming an opinion as to her talents or abilities."

"Do you think her pretty?"

"Exceedingly so," replied Emma warmly; "it is a countenance that improves on one so very much—surely you must admire her."

Sir William did not return a direct answer, and Emma suspected that he would have been more ready with a reply, had his admiration been merely superficial. Yet it had struck her that Miss Osborne's manner to him was uncertain and capricious, as if she did not wish to give him encouragement, or was trying to play with his feelings,

whilst Sir William, instead of seeking to overcome this, appeared rather desirous of amusing himself with some other objects.

She began to think she was the subject of some spell, destined to be the puppet of one or other of her companions, who seemed continually acting towards her some part which she could not understand. Perhaps they were all trifling with her feelings, or amusing themselves at her expense by giving her encouragement which induced her to enter society decidedly above what was her proper situation.

She tried to shake off this very uncomfortable feeling, but it seemed to have taken fast hold of her mind, and her hitherto animated countenance became again clouded, her steps were dull, and her whole air exhibited fatigue and depression.

Sir William was evidently watching her closely, and this annoyed her; presently he said again,

“Then after all, she is not so much your friend as I fancied.”

Totally forgetful, at the moment, of the subject on which they had just been conversing, Emma started at this address, and looked puzzled without replying.

“I mean,” continued he, answering her look, “that I had fancied you were parti-

cular friends, and I wished to hear your opinion of her—of Miss Osborne.”

“My opinion, I assure you, would not be worth giving, Sir William; but I will inform you though I cannot presume to call myself her friend, I have received very great attention from Miss Osborne, which has naturally prepossessed me in her favor; and what I have seen of her gives me such an opinion of her, that if our situations in life had made us equal, I dare say our acquaintance might have grown into friendship.”

This assurance apparently satisfied Sir William, as he dropped the subject of Miss Osborne, and started off on a lively dissertation on the nature of friendship, which amused Emma as long as she had strength for the dance or attention to bestow on him. Her weariness however had increased so much that she at last gave up, and was glad to rest in a corner, before she had completed the allotted two dances. Here she was discovered by Miss Osborne, who moved to compassion by her weary looks, or influenced perhaps by some other unacknowledged motive, was persuaded, after a faint opposition, to allow her to retire to rest.

And so ended Emma's enjoyments of the ball at Osborne Castle; it had certainly been productive of little pleasure, and had

cost her a handsome dress; yet upon the whole she found herself regretting less the actual injury inflicted on her than the unrealized pleasure which her imagination had promised.

She was convinced, on reflection, that this dissatisfaction must spring from some fault in her own mind; had her feelings been under proper regulation, she would have entered with contentment or satisfaction into the amusement before her, instead of worrying and wearying her spirit in wishes for what was withheld. Her partiality for Mr. Howard was the origin of all this; and if this incipient partiality already produced her so much discontent and evil feeling, it became her to check it at once, and vigorously, lest she should find herself deprived of her peace of mind, before she was aware that she had gone astray.

The conjoined effects of excitement of mind, and unusual dissipation tended naturally to produce a restless and sleepless night, and finding early the next morning that her head would be the better for fresh air, she resolved to try and find her way out of doors before the breakfast which would probably be at a very late hour.

The wintry sun-beams were sparkling on the hoar frost, and glancing red upon the

naked boughs of the trees around, as she quitted the porch; the air was brisk and enlivening—the sky free from clouds—and promising herself a pleasant ramble, she walked into the park. The path she chose lay along the side of beautiful hanging wood of beech, and she pursued it in profound solitude for some time, hearing no other sound than the echo of her own footsteps on the hard ringing gravel; but after walking a considerable distance, it struck her that there was a sound of other feet in her vicinity which seemed to be keeping parallel with herself, but farther in the wood. Supposing it might be some labourer or gamekeeper, she paused to listen, and allow them to pass on; but the steps likewise ceased when she did, and that so immediately as to make her doubt if it were not fancy altogether.

Again resuming her walk, she immediately heard the accompanying sound, and this time being convinced it was no delusion, she tried to see through the wood, and ascertain who was thus her silent companion, but the shrubs and underwood were too thick to allow her to see anything.

Not quite liking to be thus accompanied, she resolved to return home, and an opening

which appeared to her to lead in the direction of the castle at that moment presenting itself, she, unhesitatingly, struck off in that direction. The footsteps no longer met her ear ; but no sooner was her attention released from this object, than she saw with a different kind of alarm that the rapidly gathering clouds predicted rain. Not liking the prospect of a wetting, she became rather anxious about the direction of the path she was following—the turns and windings of which began to perplex her, and she soon came to the conclusion that she had quite lost her way. Certain, however, that the castle must be within a mile of her, though not visible from where she stood, she would have rambled on indifferent to this consideration, but for the state of the weather, which became every moment more threatening.

Hoping to discover the turrets of the castle amidst the trees, she climbed up a small eminence, in order to obtain a more extensive prospect, and from this spot, though no view of Osborne Castle met her eyes, she saw in a little glen beneath a cottage, apparently belonging to a keeper or gardener, and there she determined to apply for directions as to the shortest way home.

During the momentary pause, whilst taking this survey of the landscape, her quick ear again caught the sound of the footsteps which had before seemed to follow her. Well aware that there could in reality be no cause for alarm, she overcame, as well as she could, the sort of nervous excitement which had increased upon her feelings, and listened attentively.

Her nerves were naturally firm, though her fancy was lively, and she, under ordinary circumstances, would have cared little for her invisible companion, but the excitement of last night's dissipation, probably, affected her in some degree, as it was with a sensible palpitation of her heart that she awaited the appearance of the intruder, as she thought he must immediately be visible between the open trees near her. The tread was light and steady, evidently that of a gentleman, too light, she thought, for Lord Osborne, who was not remarkable for his grace in walking; and her heart suggested the idea that it might be Mr. Howard.

She would not speak to him, if it were, that she was resolved on; she would not allow him to be friendly only in private, whilst he was cold and distant before witnesses; but she thought she should like to

ascertain if it was he, and like to see how he would be disposed to behave.

The steps were now so close, another moment must reveal the figure; she would not seem to be waiting for him, and turned once more to look at the lodge below, to which a few large heavy drops of rain made it advisable she should speedily retreat; and whilst her head was thus averted a few rapid bounds brought to her side Sir William Gordon.

The young man would in all probability have felt but little gratified had he known that the flush on her cheek at his sight was entirely one of mortification and disappointment, for whatever she might try to persuade herself, she was really quite disappointed that the intruder was not Mr. Howard, as she had fancied.

She gave him as friendly a return to his salutation as she could force from her lips—far more than she felt from the fear of betraying her feelings; whilst he professed most unbounded satisfaction at his good luck in thus overtaking her.

On his enquiring where she was going, she owned she had lost her way, and was thinking of taking shelter in the cottage before them from the rapidly encreasing rain.

"Do you require shelter?" cried he; "then let us hasten there at once; but I thought you must be a fairy or a sprite, no mortal maiden could be walking at this hour after dancing all night as you did. Seeing you could go without rest, I naturally concluded you would be alike indifferent to the variations of the elements—proof to the storm—impervious to the rain."

Emma smilingly assured him she was very far from this; and that she must now condescend to make haste to avoid a thorough wetting. He begged to be allowed to show her the way, and as they descended the steep side of the glen together, she felt that she ought to be thankful for his arrival, as the path was so abrupt, and in some places almost precipitous that his support was, if not absolutely necessary, at least very convenient, when in a hurry, as she was at present.

With all their haste, however, she was not a little wet, by the time they stood in the porch of the lodge, and were right glad when, on the door unclosing, in answer to their knock, they saw a bright fire burning on the hearth.

The keeper's wife, a pretty and neat-looking young woman, very hospitably pressed

them to enter, exerted herself to dry Emma's cloak and hat, and then asking if they had breakfasted, set about preparing them a meal with all expedition, probably pitying the uncomfortable lot of those who were obliged by fashion to defer their morning meal so long. The keen appetite which a walk on a winter's morning would produce was sufficient to have made welcome even inferior fare to that which she displayed. The excellent bread and butter, the eggs, the apples, the raspberry jam, were all tempting in themselves, and the jug of home-brewed ale which she placed for Sir William was declared by him to be an excellent substitute for chocolate after a late supper and an early walk.

Whilst she was preparing these things, her child, an infant of a few months old, awoke in its cradle near the chimney corner. Perceiving that the mother was too busy to attend to him, Emma volunteered to act the part of nurse; and, being really fond of children, took much pleasure in the occupation. Sir William looked at her with admiration—he had been struck with her when dressed for the ball, and surrounded by a crowd of other elegant women, but here the effect was doubled by the accompaniments. The small and plainly furnished

room, was brightly illumined by the blazing fire—which, in spite of the gloom without, threw a ruddy glow over every thing beside it.”

Emma’s simple dress shewing her figure unencumbered by ornament or superfluous clothing, her dark hair, now wetted by the rain carelessly pushed back from her glowing cheeks, highly coloured by the rapid exercise which she had just undergone; her graceful movements as she tossed and played with the infant in her arms, and the sweet smiles which she bestowed on the really pretty child, struck him as forming the prettiest picture he had ever seen. He drew back a little to contemplate it, and being an excellent artist, he could not resist the temptation of trying a sketch of her figure on a leaf in his pocket-book.

Engrossed with her charge, and not much caring for his company, she did not for some time notice his occupation, and he had made a very satisfactory though slight sketch of her, before she was in the least aware of it. But suddenly turning to him, and catching his eyes fixed on her, whilst the pencil was suspended under his fingers, the idea of what he was doing struck her at once. The perfect simplicity of her manner when charging him with it,

the freedom from all affectation, and all appearance of gratified vanity, seemed to him no less remarkable than her grace and beauty, and he no longer wondered at the effect her presence had visibly exercised over both Lord Osborne and Mr. Howard, and only felt surprise that Miss Osborne herself should not feel uneasy at placing her brother in proximity to so captivating a girl. He was sure, had his heart been free, she would inevitably have conquered it, but his long standing partiality for Miss Osborne herself was not to be overthrown by the unconscious rivalry of Emma Watson.

"I was not aware you were an artist, Sir William," said she, quietly taking the paper from his hand and looking over it, "this indicates that you are a master of the pencil. You will allow me to keep it I hope, it can be of no use to you."

"Excuse me, the sketch I cannot part with, at least not at present, I wish to make a drawing of the subject; as the interior of a cottage it will be perfect; pray do not require me to give it up." As he spoke he took the sketch from her, as if afraid she might detain it against his wishes.

She said no more in opposition, but looking out of the window, began to wonder

whether there was any prospect of the rain ceasing, so as to give them a chance of reaching the Castle in comfort.

"I assure you we shall not be missed these two hours," said he, "there is not the remotest chance of any one being up in the Castle before noon, after such a ball as that of last night."

"I should not like to spend many such nights," observed Emma, "one soon tires of pleasure or rather of dissipation."

"What sort of life would you have, Miss Watson, could you decide your lot with a wish—have you made up your mind?"

"Hardly, it is a point that requires reflection, and I cannot say that I have bestowed much on it," replied Emma.

"Indeed—you don't say so—I thought all young ladies settled that before hand—the situation, residence, fortune, even the name which the future was to bring them, do you not arrange that entirely?"

If that is the case I am sadly behind hand," replied she smiling.

"It is never too late to mend, that must be your comfort; begin now—do you prefer the country, or are you ambitious of a house in town?"

"Oh, the latter of course; a house in town and ten thousand a-year; you can-

not imagine I should stop short if I once began wishing, what would be the good of that?"

"Bravo, I like to hear a lady speak her opinion boldly—so you are ambitious after all; I should not have thought that from your face, I am a great studier of countenance."

"But indeed you must blame yourself for my ambitious wishes," retorted Emma, "I am sure it was you who put them into my head, I told you I had never thought of anything of the kind."

"Very well, I see you are a promising pupil, I shall be proud of your progress, I have no doubt, but now to tell you the truth I should have assigned you a quiet cot in the country, a retired home, domestic cares and joys, a round of parochial duties, cheered by peace and content—a clever and well-educated companion, not a dashing or ambitious one. I read your feelings as I thought in your face, and should have expected you to choose such a lot; you see how the best physiognomist may be mistaken—you blush for me I perceive."

Emma did blush more than she wished, and she felt too much to dare to answer for a moment, then recovering herself with an effort, she replied:

"Are you aware, Sir William, how nearly you have drawn my lot—did you know I was the daughter of a country parson, and am situated nearly as you describe?"

"No indeed," replied he with much animation, "I am after all then a better guesser than I took credit for, it is curious that I should have so closely described you. You live in the midst of content and peace do you!"

"I always thought content was an internal, not an external blessing," replied Emma, again evading his question, "one which it became our duty to cultivate for ourselves, and I was blaming myself for enjoying so little of it at this moment, being sensible that I feel rather discontented at the detention in this cottage."

"Well, I am certainly more amiable than you, Miss Watson, for I am as happy as possible, or nearly so at least. But now you mention it, it occurs to me that perhaps the rain may continue all day, in which case we should be really confined in our present refuge. Suppose we were to consult with the hostess as to the means of escape."

"But what means can she suggest?" enquired Emma, "except walking home, and

in that case we shall certainly get wet through."

"I do not see that that catastrophe is absolutely inevitable," replied he, "we might send to the Castle for a carriage; this seems to me the most simple remedy; do you object?"

Emma was rather startled at the idea of taking such a liberty, but she thought, perhaps, Sir William knew the ways of the family best, and she did not raise any objection. Mrs. Browning, the keeper's wife, when called into counsel, regretted extremely that she had no one about whom she could send on such an errand, her husband being out with the boy that helped; she would have gone herself but she had a cough, and was afraid of the wet. This was an unexpected dilemma. Sir William meditated in silence.

"You have no carriage, Mrs. Browning, I suppose?"

"Bless you, no, sir—only one little tilted cart, which my husband drives to church on Sunday."

"Well and is not that at home—can we not have that? it would do admirably if we could;" cried he, delighted at the idea.

"Certainly, sir, I think I could harness

it for you, the horse is at home to-day unluckily—I will go and see about it.”

“No, no, my good woman, let me go and see,—I dare say, I can manage the affair without troubling you,” said Sir William.

But she assured him her presence was necessary to shew him the way, at least ; but, if the young lady would be so kind as again to hold the infant, they would soon have every thing right. To this, of course, Emma readily agreed, and she soon, from the thinness of the partition, heard Sir William’s voice joking with their hostess about the horse and harness.

In about ten minutes he returned.

“Miss Watson,” said he, “your carriage is waiting—are you ready to undertake the expedition under my escort?”

Emma assented ; and, after thanking the mother, and kissing the child—a process which Sir William pretended likewise to imitate, she was conducted to the door, and assisted into the neat, little chay-cart by him—and, under his protection, commenced the journey.

“What a charming little scene,” cried he, slackening the reins to allow the horse to walk up a long hill ; “I wish you would

write a pastoral poem descriptive of the little cottage and its inhabitants, Miss Watson."

"And make you the hero of it, of course," replied Emma, "I wish I could, the subject would be decidedly novel and amusing."

"Oh! by all means, make me the hero; introduce me in any way you like, you could not do wrong."

"I should particularly celebrate your great and glorious appetite, and the heroic way in which you attacked the bread and butter," said she.

"Miss Watson, you are growing satirical, I will not trust you; I know you will say something cruel of me, I see it in your eyes."

"Your dexterity in harnessing a horse, that shall likewise be commemorated—we will say nothing about your buckling the traces all wrong, or the assistance Mrs. Browning was compelled to give you."

"Are you a witch, Miss Watson?" cried he. "How came you to know of my little blunders; upon my word, I begin to suspect you of something strange."

"Likewise your extreme partiality for little babies, and your amiable caresses bestowed on them."

"Why, the baby was not exactly the thing I should have chosen to kiss," replied he, slyly, "but mothers and nurses *seem* to prefer it to having such fees paid to themselves; but, if you think I was wrong, we will go another day and I will make a more judicious selection."

"Far from it; I think you displayed peculiar judgment and taste—I am serious in commending it. On the whole, I think you have behaved nobly this morning, and posterity should learn your merits through my song, if it were only in my power to write verses."

"Nay, now, I trust you are not going to have the cruelty to retract; remember, whilst I celebrate the adventure with my pencil, I shall trust to you to do so with your pen," cried he.

She only smiled and shook her head in reply, then, after a moment's pause, she suggested that it might, perhaps, be in his power to quicken the pace of the horse.

He assured her he was in no hurry; and he feared it would jolt her inconveniently, if they drove very fast. She was obliged to submit, as she saw he was determined to have his own way—but she thought the drive rather tedious, and

was quite relieved when they reached the porch.

"Holla, what have you got there?" cried a voice, which she had no difficulty in recognising. "Why, Gordon, when did you set up that handsome equipage?"

"I will tell you, presently, Osborne—but I must first assist Miss Watson out," replied Sir William, gravely.

"Miss Watson! why, in the name of all that's wonderful, what frolic is this? If you wanted to take a drive with Miss Watson, why did you not take her in your curricule, Gordon?"

"Because, my good fellow," replied the baronet; "the curricule being uncovered, would have exposed us to the rain; you had better trust to me, Miss Watson, and let me lift you out—the step is very awkward for a lady—gently, now, there, you are safe," as he set her down within the porch, "I hope you are none the worse for your expedition. Do you not see, Osborne, this, our coach, is weather proof—and, therefore, convenient in such a rainy day."

"But where have you been!"

"Only driving in the park—surely your lordship cannot object to so innocent a recreation."

"Why did you not ask for one of the

carriages" said he reproachfully turning to Emma, who was trying not to laugh at his wondering look. "Then I could have accompanied you!"

"We are exceedingly obliged to you," replied Emma, "but—"

"But," interrupted Sir William, "we were quite content with each other's society—and, as to our equipage, I defy you to produce one from your coach-house, at all to be compared to this elegant vehicle. Miss Watson, were you ever in one you liked better?"

"Never in one, for the loan of which I felt more obliged, I admit," replied she.

"There, I knew it; only add you never had a better charioteer, and then I shall be satisfied. I want a little commendation myself," added Sir William.

"I do not think you do—you seem so uncommonly well satisfied with your own exploits," returned Emma, laughing.

"Do come and have something to eat," interposed Lord Osborne, "I've done mine, but my sister and Miss Carr are in the breakfast-room."

And he laid his hand on Emma's as he spoke, and led her away.

Sir William, after sending for his groom to take home the cart, ran after his com-

panions and joined them at the door of the breakfast-room. Both the young ladies raised their eyes in astonishment and visible curiosity, at their entrance together.

"Been out walking, Miss Watson," cried Miss Carr, "there must be something superlatively delightful in such a morning as this—are you partial to rain?"

"Not at all," replied Emma, "but it did not rain when I left the castle, and I did not think it would."

"Did you walk far?—and are you not wet?" enquired Miss Osborne, rather coldly.

Emma assured her she was perfectly dry.

"Where do you think we breakfasted, Miss Osborne?" commenced Sir William, "for I beg to inform you, we, early risers, have had a walk, a breakfast and a drive, this morning, before your finished your first meal."

"Really, I cannot pretend to guess where so eccentric a person as Sir William Gordon takes his breakfast, or what his amusements are."

"Oh, do tell us," cried Miss Carr, "so you and Miss Watson have been visiting together, have you; in some gipsy-camp or where?"

"No, indeed, you must guess again."

"Not I," replied Miss Carr, pushing back her chair from the breakfast table, "I have no talents for divination. Rosa, I am going to your room to try your harp—will you come when you are at leisure?"

Miss Osborne assented.

Emma, who had not sat down, declined all breakfast, and proposed to go to her own room to remove her walking dress—enquiring of Miss Osborne where she should find her afterwards.

"I will shew you your way," cried that young lady—then leading her into the hall, "that flight of stairs leads to the gallery where your bed-room is. I will wait for you here, before this fire."

Emma walked slowly up-stairs, and turning her head, she saw Sir William join Miss Osborne and address her. His reception was any thing but gracious—the young lady seemed bitterly offended about something, drew up her head—pouted her under lip, and gave unmistakeable signs of being out of temper with him. Emma did not wait to see whether he succeeded in propitiating her anger, which she suspected arose from the supposition that they had been walking together; and, to allay which, she determined to give an accurate account of

their adventure. On descending again to the hall, she found only her friend, the gentleman having disappeared, and with her she proceeded to the sitting room where Miss Osbonre usually spent her mornings.

Here the three girls were sufficiently merry and talkative, but Emma could not find an opportunity of introducing the subject of her morning walk, which she could not help fancying was scrupulously avoided by her young hostess—a circumstance which rather annoyed her, as she particularly desired to explain the reason of her return with Sir William.

CHAPTER III.

THE whole day was too wet to allow anything like exercise out of doors, and Miss Carr complained bitterly of the stupidity and dullness of a wet morning after a ball; indeed she found it so great an evil that she threw herself on a sofa and fell into a doze, from which she was roused by the entrance of Lord Osborne. At sight of him she started up, and tried to be animated and agreeable, but it was evidently thrown away upon him, as he seated himself by Emma, who was engaged in embroidering for his sister, and began to admire her work.

Emma's manners were too quiet and re-

served to give Miss Carr any ground for supposing she was a voluntary rival, but his were so unusually animated as to make his admiration of her indubitable, and Miss Carr's jealousy extreme. Emma's thoughts were wandering—two wonders continually occupied her mind, one on the subject of Margaret and Tom Musgrove—the other more nearly connected with her own feelings and sentiments. She was roused by Miss Osborne's enquiring of her brother if he had seen any of their friends at the Parsonage that day. His answer was in the affirmative; he had been walking with Howard and had a long chat with him about something of importance, and Howard was thinking of going away for a few weeks, if he could get any one to take his duty; he thought his sister wanted change of air, and it was a long time since he had enjoyed a holiday.

"Going away!" exclaimed Miss Osborne, with a look of utter amazement; "this does take me entirely by surprise. What in the world can influence him to such a freak as that! going away, and at such a time!"

"I do not see why he should not go if he likes travelling in the cold," observed Lord Osborne coolly; "he has a right to a holiday if he chooses."

"And he has worked particularly hard of late," added Miss Carr maliciously; "he has had double duty to perform."

"He is always very attentive to the parish," said Miss Osborne.

"Yes, both to old and young—the charitable visits that he pays to some old ladies are most exemplary," continued Miss Carr in a sarcastic tone. "No doubt he will be rewarded for his exertions, but I fear he will be much missed in his absence."

Miss Osborne frowned and bit her lip; Emma continued to devote an apparently steady attention to her work, and would not speak. Lord Osborne added,

"I gave him leave to go, as far as I was concerned, but I do not know whether her ladyship will like it. However, I think it rather hard if the poor man cannot have a holiday now and then; he's a very good sort of fellow, that Howard, though he was my tutor, I have a great regard for him; don't you think so too, Miss Watson."

"It is very natural that you should," replied Emma as steadily as she could, but not very well understanding what his lordship meant.

"I asked him to dine here to-day," continued he; "he said he should like to see you, Rosa, before he went, or something

of that sort, but he did not seem certain about dining here, or when he should come up. I almost fancy he is not well, he is so different from usual."

"Something must be the matter with him indeed, if you notice a change, Osborne!" exclaimed his sister; "for I do not think you in general very quick at observing faces or expressions. I must certainly see him."

"I fancy he played his cards ill last night," said Miss Carr; "he made some blunder between hearts and diamonds I believe—I am certain he mistook one suit for another."

"You know very little of Mr. Howard, Fanny," replied her friend; "pray don't pretend to judge him, it's absurd."

"Of course it is," carelessly answered she; "it's not to be expected I should know anything of a man so completely out of my sphere. I dare say he is a mighty good sort of man, but he rather tires me when he talks."

"Where is Sir William Gordon?" enquired Miss Carr after a pause. "I wish he would come here, he amuses me with his nonsense."

"In the library painting. By the bye, Miss Watson, that's one thing I meant to speak about," continued his lordship with

eager animation. "Do you know he has got the most capital likeness of you I ever saw; how came you to sit to him?—and he vows he will not give it to me."

"I did not sit to him," replied Emma, eager to clear up the mystery of her walk; "he made it without my knowing it, this morning. We happened to meet just as it began to rain, and both took shelter in the keeper's cottage, when he amused himself drawing, whilst I was playing with the baby."

"Oh," said Lord Osborne; "I wish you would tell him to give it to me."

"I cannot interfere with it, my lord," said she smiling. "I begged for the sketch myself and was refused."

"I vow I must see it," cried Miss Carr: 'do come, Rosa, and keep me in countenance in intruding on his studio.'

Miss Osborne declined, but suggested that her brother would do as well, if she wished for a companion, or fancied a guard was necessary.

"Do come!" cried the sprightly Fanny. "Be my guide and protector."

"Quite unnecessary, Miss Carr—Sir William neither bites nor stings," replied she coolly and without attempting to move.

"You are a—what name shall I call you

bad enough! Rosa, I vow I will go and have a *tête-à-tête* with Sir William—a nice little quiet flirtation, if you will not come with me.”

“Very well, it will serve to keep you awake—pray do,” replied she apparently quite unmoved.

Miss Carr departed, and a moment after Miss Osborne rose and walking to the window stood there in deep contemplation for some time. The other two were perfectly silent in the interval—at length returning to her companions, she took her brother's arm, and saying she wanted some conversation with him, she led him out to the conservatory to which a door opened from the room, and they disappeared from Emma. Left alone she sank into a profound reverie, and was engaged in trying, but not very successfully, to bring her own thoughts into order and discipline, when a gentle knock was heard at the door, and on her inviting the visitor to enter, Mr. Howard presented himself.

Both lady and gentleman were excessively embarrassed at this unexpected encounter.

“I expected to find Miss Osborne here,” said he.

“She has just left the room,” replied

she, sitting down again, and then not another word was spoken by either for some minutes. He was trying to be cold, she to be easy and natural; apparently she had the greatest success in her efforts, for after some deliberation, she said in as calm a voice as she could command:

"I hear you are thinking of leaving home, Mr. Howard, I hope I shall see Mrs. Willis again before you do."

"I suppose Lord Osborne told you?" replied he with a tone and emphasis which she could not quite comprehend.

"I certainly heard it from him," answered she, rather annoyed at his abruptness, and puzzled what to say next.

Another pause of some duration followed, and then he broke it, by an enquiry if she had enjoyed the ball last night. She answered rather eagerly, not nearly so much as the first one she had attended.

"I am surprised," replied he in a cold voice, "I fancied the friendly kindness of Miss Osborne, and the attentions of her brother would have secured you a pleasant evening."

"I hope I am not ungrateful for Miss Osborne's goodness, but she could not with her best endeavours secure happiness even for a single evening; and as to the atten-

tions of her brother, to tell you the truth, such as they are they are not particularly conducive to pleasure. There was far more exaltation than excitement in being honored as his partner."

"We are, perhaps, all inclined to undervalue what is in our power," replied he very gravely.

"I beg your pardon, but I do not see what that has to do with the present case," said Emma, "it is not in my power to think Lord Osborne an entertaining partner, or a good dancer, and though I mean no reflection on him, I should not be sorry to think it was the last time we shall ever stand up together."

"Possibly it may be," said he with a peculiar smile.

She could not make him out at all, and resolved not to speak again, since he seemed determined to quarrel with her. Again he broke the silence by an observation:

"I suppose now you have seen more of Osborne Castle, Miss Emma Watson, you have become better reconciled to it."

"I like it very much," said Emma, finding she was expected to say something, and not quite certain what would be best.

"I remember not long ago that you ex-

pressed very different sentiments," continued he, "but circumstances are altered now, no doubt, and it is astonishing how soon the mind becomes accustomed to such a change. We feel inclined to doubt that we ever thought otherwise from what we do now."

"Perhaps that is the reason," said Emma, "why I am unconscious of any change in my thoughts and feelings regarding the Castle and its inmates, except the natural feelings of being more at home here than before."

"That will probably encrease," said he significantly, "you will be much here in future."

"I do not think that," said Emma, "I have no claim on Miss Osborne which can lead me to expect such an honor."

"Those who have rank and wealth in their hands have a heavy responsibility," exclaimed he in a sort of reverie.

She made no reply, but continued her embroidery with exemplary perseverance, secretly entertaining a hope that some one would soon come in, to relieve her from the embarrassment of a very uncomfortable *tête-à-tête*. Presently looking up, when about to change the silk in her needle, she met his eyes fixed on her with a look

which seemed at once to contradict the coldness of his tones and the gravity of his expressions. It called a deep blush into her cheeks, to see the earnest yet sad interest with which he regarded her; and she eagerly busied herself with her work in order to conceal her own emotion. She wished to speak, but could think of nothing to say sufficiently unconnected with her present feelings to make it safe to discuss. He was the first to break the silence.

"You do not agree with me, Miss Watson, I perceive; has your further intimacy in the Castle taught you that a pre-eminent situation is one of pleasure as well as honor; have you become convinced that happiness can be purchased and secured more easily in an exalted circle, or that distinction and luxury are good substitutes for liberty and ease."

"If I had thought my simple silence would have laid me open to such an imputation, Mr. Howard," replied Emma, "I should certainly have assented to your proposition."

"Forgive me for attributing the idea to you," said he in a more animated tone "honored as I have been with so much intercourse with you, it would be impossible for me to avoid feeling interested in your

sentiments, and desirous for your happiness."

"I am much obliged for your kind expressions, but I trust that a visit of a few days in this family, need not give rise to any very alarming apprehensions amongst my friends, for my peace of mind and general content. These would be hardly worth caring for, if they were so easily thrown into disorder."

"Eyes unaccustomed to face the light, are easily dazzled," replied he significantly, "and for long afterwards can see nothing in its true colours."

She reflected for a few moments, and then looking up said, with some warmth:

"Am I to infer from what you say, that you think my acquaintance with Miss Osborne or even her brother likely to make me dissatisfied or unhappy; to induce me to disregard former friends, or despise those who have before been kind to me? Tell me plainly what you mean, Mr. Howard; it would be much easier and safer to be at once explicit, if you really wish to act the part of a friend."

She fixed her eyes on him as she spoke, her bashfulness overcome or forgotten in her eager anxiety for an answer—an ex-

planation. His countenance, in his turn, betrayed extreme embarrassment, and he evidently hesitated what to say. She continued after a short pause, finding he gave no reply :

“ I cannot help being afraid from your words, that you have some such charge to lay against me. Tell me, did Mrs. Willis think I neglected her last night ; that I was too much engrossed with Miss Osborne. I should be extremely grieved were this the case, for nothing could be further from my wishes ; if she felt hurt at anything, I fear I must have been wrong, and would willingly do anything in my power to explain the circumstance.”

Mr. Howard's countenance betrayed that he was feeling much ; but of what nature Emma could not exactly decide. He answered evidently with an effort,

“ I assure you, you quite misunderstood me ; I never intended to give you the impression that Clara was jealous of Miss Osborne. Your mutual friendship need not exclude you from intimacy with others—friendship is not like love—it should not—it certainly need not be encumbered by jealousy. But, Miss Watson, there is a feeling, a sentiment—a species of friendship, which will not bear a rival ; an affec-

tion which is covetous of the smiles bestowed on others; which can only be satisfied by an entire return—" he paused a moment, and then added, "I beg your pardon, I have said too much, and I cannot expect you to understand me. We are going in a few days to some distance, and, perhaps, I may not see you again—I wish you every happiness—may you never have reason to do otherwise than rejoice in the friendships you contract," he stopped very abruptly, and after a momentary hesitation hastily quitted the room.

Emma was left alone to try and comprehend, as well as she could, the meaning and object of his very desultory conversation. There began to dawn upon her mind a new idea; he was jealous of Lord Osborne. It was undoubtedly the fact; but her own feelings were in such a state of confusion that she hardly comprehended whether it gave her more pain than pleasure to think this.

It was a very great pleasure to feel that he really cared for her. Jealousy by its existence proved love, and after her doubts as to his feelings and wishes this unexpected manifestation of his mind was at first very welcome. Certainly his going away was unfortunate and, in her opinion,

ill-judged—it was resigning without a struggle—it was leaving the field open to his rival—it was, for anything he knew to the contrary, losing all chance of success, absolutely throwing away the opportunity. Did this look like a very ardent or determined affection—she feared not—to run away without necessity seemed rather to indicate a wish to give up the contest—perhaps he loved her against his will, his judgment, his sense of duty; but no—then he would not have waited for the appearance of a rival to teach him the necessity of avoiding her presence. Perhaps he only wished to give her time to know her own wishes—and form her own judgment of Lord Osborne, to allow him an open and undisputed field; and when he found his fears were visionary and groundless he would return. This she hoped to be the case.

As to his lordship, she never entertained a serious idea about him till this moment; and now, but for Mr. Howard's superior knowledge of his disposition, she should certainly have supposed that there was no risk of his making any one jealous by his attentions.

She could not suppose the idea of allying himself with a family plain and un-

distinguished like hers could possibly have entered his head; nor could she easily imagine any one who in person, habits, and taste would be less tempting to her. There was no credit due to her for not liking him—the absence of all ambition to become a baroness seemed so perfectly natural when the rank must be shared with such an individual. Superiority of station could not weigh a moment in her estimation, against superiority of intellect; her ambition did not prompt her to wish for distinction and honor only possessed because they were hereditary—but for the distinction of talent—the honor of virtue and worth: this was what had charms for her above all the gold, the splendour, the rank which the baron could offer.

Yet seriously she never expected to have the opportunity of proving her entire disinterestedness; the choice would never lie in her power; Lord Osborne could not seriously contemplate such a mesalliance, nor could his mother and sister possibly countenance it if he did. The idea carried absurdity and contradiction with itself: he certainly looked at her a good deal; but she could not build a substantial edifice of hope on so narrow a foundation in reality. He probably had looked at twenty girls be-

fore in the same way; and as to any other attentions, they were not so marked as to have raised any speculations in her own mind.

It was true Elizabeth had laughingly accused her of captivating him—but Elizabeth was only in joke—she could not have really imagined it possible. This idea raised a new dilemma in her mind.

Suppose Mr. Howard should have retired only to make way for the passive admiration of Lord Osborne; suppose he was waiting till his lordship left off looking at her; and suppose he never should do that—that his devotion should never proceed beyond a look—no expression escape him—but the expression which his eyes might chance to convey, what should she do, to show her indifference to his looks, and the absence of all speculation on their meaning which she really felt. She could not tell how to repulse him into a state of inoffensive acquiescence, or how to convince Mr. Howard, under such circumstances, that there was nothing to fear from his rivalry. Besides she was not to see him again for a long time. How very unkind of him to go away and leave her merely because Lord Osborne had such a fancy for looking at her.

Mr. Howard had paid her more attention, had shown more interest in her, had made a much deeper impression on her feelings than any one she had ever known, and now he was voluntarily leaving her. It was unkind—unjust—ungenerous—it was all sorts of bad things; she began to look on it in a new light—to get almost angry with him, to think him unreasonable—capricious—not worth caring about—for five minutes, at least, she was quite indignant, and resolute not to interest herself any more about him.

How long this new state of feeling might have lasted, if left to itself, it was impossible to say, she was interrupted by the entrance of Lord Osborne, who hurried into the room with an entreaty that she would return with him to the library.

Emma rather demurred to this request; at that moment, she felt little inclined to go any where, especially in compliance with Lord Osborne's wishes. But on her begging to know what he wanted, he reiterated his entreaty with more urgency, and no explanation. She, therefore, decidedly declined, he then expressed great mortification and regret, ending with an assurance that Sir William Gordon wanted her.

She continued to refuse, quickly observ-

ing that she was sorry to disappoint Sir William Gordon by disobeying his summons, but she did not feel equal to such an exertion—and, therefore, if the interview was inevitable, he had better come to her.

Lord Osborne declared he would go and tell him so. She had no idea that he was seriously intending so to do; but as soon as he had left the room she began to put away her work that she might escape into solitude. This and the necessary arrangements took her up some time—she found he had entangled her silk whilst sitting by her side; and before she had put every thing in proper order, she found her solitude again invaded by Lord Osborne, who returned together with Sir William and Miss Carr, when all three united in entreating her to come at once to the library.

Emma still persisted in begging for an explanation of their request; and as soon as any of the party would attend to her sufficiently to give her an answer, she learnt that the object they had in view was, that she should sit to Sir William, in order to give him the opportunity of correctly finishing the sketch he had hastily made in the morning. Emma declined; the origi-

nal sketch, she declared, had been surreptitiously taken, and must now be finished in the best way it could without any intervention on her part.

"How cruel—how unkind!" exclaimed Miss Carr; "my dear Miss Watson, you will break Sir William's heart. I assure you he is bent on carrying away a faithful remembrance of you."

"No, no, Gordon is to give it to me," interposed Lord Osborne, "I told him so, and I shall certainly expect it."

"I shall do no such thing, I assure you," returned Sir William, "if I part with it at all, I shall give it to Mrs. Willis, my particular friend and favorite, Mrs. Willis, to hang in the parlour at the parsonage."

"Finish it as you please—and hang it where you please, but excuse my undergoing the penance of a sitting for any such object," replied Emma.

"I had not the presumption to ask it," said Sir William, "and only accompanied my good friends here, lest they should take liberties in my name which I could not sanction. The utmost I request is, that you should come and look at my picture."

To get rid of their importunity, she con-

sented to go with them; and in the library she found Miss Osborne, who had not joined the embassy, and did not look in a particularly happy mood. Emma saw at once that all was not right there, and regarded her friend's disturbed countenance with some anxiety. Miss Carr amused herself with finding all manner of fault in the painting, which Sir William persisted in denying, declaring the defects she saw arose only from the unfinished state of the work. Emma did not attend to them, but turned to Miss Osborne, and began to explain to her, how, when, and where, the sketch was made.

Miss Osborne listened in silence for some time, but looked relieved, and then begged her to oblige Sir William by consenting. She was much surprised, but the grave and earnest way in which the request was made, induced her, after a momentary hesitation to comply.

Miss Osborne engaged for her, that she should not be detained more than an hour, a stipulation which was the pleasantest part of the arrangement, as both Lord Osborne and Miss Carr stationed themselves behind Sir William, one chattering about every stroke he drew, and commenting on her figure as if she had been an inanimate ob-

ject—the other staring in his unmerciful way at her face, delighted to be furnished with so excellent an opportunity, and so good an excuse.

“Be sure and make her complexion dark enough, Sir William,” cried Miss Carr, “Miss Watson is so very dark—quite a brunette; I think you have made the hand a little too small, it strikes me she has not quite such slender hands—and the hair—surely, you have indulged in a little imagination there—that luxuriant braid—our eyes must see differently if you think that natural and like her own.”

“I have no doubt in the world that our eyes do see very differently, Miss Carr,” replied Sir William, “I have always observed it to be the case where feminine beauty is concerned.”

“There is not a bit too much hair,” interposed Lord Osborne, “but she does not wear it in that tumble-down fashion—she is always particularly neat and tidy about the head. I like to see a small head and pretty ear—why don’t you shew her ear; it’s a mark of blood to see a small ear—all ladies should have small ears.”

“So they should all have pretty hands,” replied Fanny Carr, “but, my dear Lord, they cannot always get them.”

As she spoke, she laid her own fairy-like fingers on his coat sleeve.

Lord Osborne moved his arm and allowed the little hand to drop unregarded. The fair Fanny thought him a great brute for the same.

"My good people," cried Sir William, "my very dear friends, I really must trouble you to move a little farther off. I think I shall send you out of the room, Miss Carr, be so good as to take Lord Osborne into the conservatory and select a bouquet for my refreshment. I cannot stand all your critical remarks at my back."

"Come, my lord," cried the young lady, "come, do as you are bid."

"Not I," said he.

"I shall not make you a copy if you do not," interposed Sir William, "nor ever let you see the original again."

"Well," said his lordship, moving reluctantly away, "I'll go on those conditions."

The couple left the room; Miss Osborne remained in silence.

"I have no objection to Miss Osborne remaining," continued he in a saucy tone, "if she is determined to patronise a poor artist with her presence."

"I am waiting for Miss Watson's sake,

Sir William," returned the lady addressed, "I cannot for a moment imagine that my presence can make any difference to you."

Emma thought her friend looked remarkably unamiable as she spoke, and wondered what was the matter.

"Have you seen Mr. Howard," enquired Rosa in a low voice.

Sir William looked up quickly, in time to catch the deep blush with which Emma's cheek was tinged, as she answered in the affirmative.

"How did you think him—my brother said he seemed unwell—what did he appear to you?"

"Very odd," replied Emma, scarcely knowing, however, what she said.

Miss Osborne mused again.

"Something must be the matter," said she at length rather earnestly.

Emma could only answer that she did not know, and wished to drop the subject. She turned to Sir William,

"I hope you are not going to try my patience much longer. I only promised for half an hour you know."

"Very true, but half an hour of that kind is of an elastic sort, extending from one hour to three at least, as I am

sure you must have experienced when obliged to wait for a friend."

"Possibly," said Emma, "but ask yourself in that case what you would do—vote it a great bore, and run away."

"An impatient, frail mortal like myself might do so, but you are too near perfection to exhibit any such weak unkindness."

"Your flattery shall not bribe me to remain. Miss Osborne, may I not go? it was at your request I stayed—pray release me from the spell."

"Sabrina, fair,
Listen where thou art sitting—"

murmured Sir William in an under tone, without looking up.

"We will go together," said Miss Osborne.

"Fair ladies, will you not first condescend to cast an eye on the production of my humble pencil. Have you no curiosity, Miss Watson—no sympathy, Miss Osborne? do give me your opinion."

"My opinion would, you know, be totally useless," said Emma, turning round from the door which she had just reached; she stopped in her speech from catching a

glance of Sir William's directed towards Miss Osborne, which seemed to say her own was not exactly the opinion he most desired. She left the room without another word, and her exit was followed by a silence of some moments' space between the two who remained.

Sir William broke it first.

"Are you absolutely determined against exhibiting any interest in my proceedings—against giving me any encouragement in my efforts?"

Miss Osborne colored deeply, then walking up to the easel said, as she affected to be examining the drawing,

"Sir William, you have no doubt an accurate eye for likenesses, but I doubt from the expression you give, whether you possess equal penetration with regard to characters."

"Give me an instance of my failure," cried he, delighted to have induced her to speak at all, "explain your critique, Miss Osborne."

"No," replied she, "I leave the application of the moral to you—you expect to produce a great effect, but the opposition jars on the senses, and produces harshness, not softness, in consequence."

He fixed his eyes on her with a look of

deep penetration, as if trying to read her thoughts in her countenance. She continued calmly to contemplate the painting, as if quite engrossed by that object.

"Are you referring entirely to this picture," enquired he, "or to some other design of mine?"

She colored still more deeply, and answered that he best knew if her censure was applicable or not.

"I own I suspect you of speaking metaphorically, Miss Osborne."

She was silent.

"But I think you wrong me," he continued, "do you suppose I should dare flatter myself that you would take any interest in my proceedings, that you would condescend to feel any concern about where I went, with whom I associated—what I was doing. Should you not condemn it as unpardonable impertinence if I presumed thus far."

"Very likely I might, Sir William, but I have an idea that it would not be the first time you had been guilty of impertinence, or expected forgiveness when you were unpardonable."

He smiled.

"I will be very candid, Miss Osborne," said he, "and if I sin in doing so, remem-

her your own accusations are alone to blame for it. I own your caprice and the variations in your conduct towards me, have for a moment made me seek the comfort of contrast in Emma Watson—but it was your own fault—you knew I loved you, and you wished to torment me.”

“Sir William, this appears to me a most extraordinary style of address—you have never, to my knowledge, uttered a word indicative of the love you now allude to as a well known feeling. However, let that pass—the love you say has done the same—why then mention it now?”

“The love has not, and cannot pass, Rosa—it is of too old and stubborn a nature, has been nursed with too much care in its infancy to be easily extinguished now. You have been unkind and variable as the wind—you have refused to speak to me—sometimes to look at me—you have said the most bitter things you could devise—you have been unjust in every possible way—now be candid and kind for once. Tell me how you really regard me!”

“As the most extraordinary of mortals, Sir William. Your manner of address may possibly have the charm of novelty—I have little experience in that way, and cannot therefore tell; but I should suppose

there were few men who preface a declaration of affection with violent abuse."

He saw that her gaiety was affected—that she really trembled, and had some trouble in commanding her countenance: he proceeded.

"What else remains to me; the devotion, the silent adoration of a twelvemonth have been of no avail—you have persisted in slighting me—now I will speak out; I love you, Rosa—you know it—give me an answer at once—reject or accept—but trifle with me no more—or I will never see your face again!"

She tried to speak, but quite overcome, she burst into tears, and seemed on the point of quitting the room, but he resolutely detained her. His arm was round her waist, his hand clasping hers, and as he whispered in her ear—"Rosa, you *do* love me"—she did not deny it.

CHAPTER IV.

HAD Emma Watson known precisely what had passed between Mr. Howard and Lord Osborne, on the morning preceding her last interview with the former, a great deal of suspense, anxiety and doubt would have been spared to her.

The young lord, in fact, had fallen deeply in love with her, and had chosen to confide his affection to his former tutor in these terms.

"I say, Howard; what a remarkably nice girl Emma Watson is—and so pretty."

"Undoubtedly, my lord," was the reply, given rather reluctantly, and with evident embarrassment.

"I don't know that I ever liked any girl half so well," continued the young lover ; "don't you think she would make a famous wife?"

Another reluctant assent was Mr. Howard's reply.

"Do you know I mean to marry her?" this was a great effort; and having made this declaration, he drew a long breath.

"You mean, my lord, to propose to her? or have you done so already?" enquired Howard, in as steady a voice as he could command.

"Oh not yet; that's the worst part of it—confound it, I wish I could get out of that. I say, Howard, you could not do it for me, could you? would not that do as well?"

"I fear not," replied he, gravely ; "I am afraid I could not trust myself ; I might make some blunder which would ruin the suit, and the blame of miscarriage would fall on me."

"Well, I suppose I must do my best some day—she's so monstrous good-natured, that I am not so much afraid of her as of many women ; but I would bet you a hundred to one, I shall make some unpardonable blunder."

"But, my dear lord, have you considered

what the consequences will be if you take this step."

"The consequences, yes—that I shall have to marry her, of course."

"And do you imagine such a marriage will be at all agreeable to your mother and sister? Will not Lady Osborne be shocked at your forming such an alliance?"

"Perhaps she may—I dare say she will—but then you see, Howard, that does not signify in the least, because, whenever I marry, she will leave the Castle and go to the old Dower House, so her not liking my wife will not signify in the smallest degree."

"You treat the idea of displeasing her very lightly, my lord."

"Well, but what would you have me do? I don't marry to please her only; and it cannot matter to her what my wife was before; for when she is my wife, she will be Lady Osborne, had she been even a cook-maid before. It's much more consequence to me to have a woman I like, than one whose pedigree is as long as my arm, if she is disagreeable. As to Rosa, she likes Emma, and I dare say she would not mind it at all; but at all events, she can marry somebody, and be happy her own way, if she will only let me be happy mine."

The animation of Lord Osborne's love had quite made him eloquent, and Howard listened to him with surprise. He saw he was bent on the step proposed; one doubt, however, remained—would he be accepted? He suggested this to his lordship.

"Why now that's just a question I cannot answer myself," replied he; "if I only knew that I should have no anxiety at all. But I think she is so very good-natured she will very likely accept me. Don't you?"

"As to her good-nature, my lord, I can answer without hesitation, but as to her accepting you, that must depend on other things—on her opinion of yourself perhaps in some degree. If she loves you, I dare say she will not refuse you."

"Only think, Howard," cried he with enthusiasm, "how pleasant it would be to be loved by her—to have her for one's wife—to say, 'Emma come and ride with me'—'Emma I want you to walk,' and she doing it immediately; always at hand to chat when one wanted, and never cross or tired, or playing whist all the evening."

Mr. Howard smiled faintly at his companion's idea of domestic felicity.

"She shall have such a beautiful house," he continued; "and she shall go to court if

she likes—all women like that—how well she will look in my mother's diamonds—she must let her have them, I declare. I wish I had made the offer and it was all settled now—don't you?"

Mr. Howard could not conscientiously say that he did.

"That's the worst part of it, and you say you will not help me. Do you think it would do to send Tom Musgrove to make the proposals? Perhaps she might not dislike that—Tom has a very winning way with the girls."

"I do not think it would do at all," replied Mr. Howard. "Independent of her possibly considering such a reference to a third person disagreeable, I know, that is I think, that she has a particular dislike to Mr. Musgrove, which would make but an unfavorable commencement for your suit."

"Indeed!—that's unlucky; I am sure I do not know what to do then, there seems no alternative but addressing her myself, and that certainly needs a great deal of courage; I had much rather leap that ditch on Clapham Common—would not you—it's desperate work. Suppose she should refuse me! a pretty confounded scrape I should be in then—what should I do Howard, then?"

"Learn to bear it like a man, my dear lord!"

"That's easy talking. I say, don't you think a man must feel preciously uncomfortable and foolish when a girl has refused him? If I were to write, it would not be so bad quite."

His companion gave a quiet assent to this proposition.

"What should I say? that's the thing; I never know what words to use: I say, I am in a complete dilemma, and must take some time to think about it and make up my mind. I want you to promise to be my friend, and faithfully keep my counsel."

He gave the required promise, and then ventured to ask if his lordship had in his own opinion any ground, from Miss Watson's conduct and manners, to expect a favorable result to his proposals. Lord Osborne flattered himself that he had; she was always very kind and cordial, smiled most sweetly, and gave him all the encouragement he could expect.

"Though you know after all, Howard," he added in conclusion, "she may still refuse me."

Mr. Howard did know this, and this knowledge was in fact his chief comfort under the infliction of such a discussion.

If he had previously entertained any doubt as to the state of his own feelings, this conversation must have enlightened him. Once or twice on previous occasions he had been seized with a temporary jealousy of Lord Osborne's place in her estimation, but from this moment the fit came strongly on him.

He was one of those individuals who never feel any confidence in their own merit, who estimate every one in some respect above themselves, and are continually mistrusting the influence which they really possess over their friends. Had he been properly aware of his own worth, his knowledge of Emma Watson's character would effectually have preserved her from the imputation he now mentally cast on her, of preferring the young lord to himself. Had phrenology then been in fashion, it is possible that the origin of this weakness would have been discovered in the absence of the bump of self-esteem; but this not being the case, and in consequence, his head never having been phrenologically examined, I cannot answer for more than the entire absence of the quality, and Mr. Howard cannot be brought forward in evidence of any phrenological theory whatever.

He felt now that he must withdraw his

attentions and give up his dearest plans, to allow a fair field to Lord Osborne's attempts—though, in doing so, he might lose her entirely. He had, for a moment, entertained the idea of explaining his wishes to his rival and asserting an equal right to compete for her hand. But he could not bring himself to confess his own attachment to a young man like his pupil; he could not depend on the secret being preserved, and he shrunk from profaning his love by making it the possible joke of Tom Musgrove and his associates. No, he would withdraw from the competition—he would not be the means of depriving her of wealth and rank—if she valued them—and if not—if, as was possible, his lordship should be refused, then, with hope and joy, he would return to try his fate in the same adventure.

For this end it was, in part, that he determined to obtain a holiday; he had long begun to feel that he ought to go for another reason, but Emma Watson's attractions had kept him stationary. The other reason arose from the sentiments which the dowager Lady Osborne began to make very apparent to him. His modesty had long resisted the idea and denied the fact, when, as often happened, he was charged by young men of his acquaint-

ance with designs upon the well-jointed widow.

But even his modest estimation of himself was forced to yield before the conviction which her looks, her manners, and her language conveyed to his mind.

Most unwelcome this conviction certainly was, as it could end, he thought, in nothing but a positive rupture between his family and the Osbornes; and unless he had the power of obtaining another home, it would certainly render them exceedingly uncomfortable. He knew the dowager to be of a vindictive disposition when she considered herself injured or insulted, and both to his own family and that of his beloved Emma, he foresaw nothing but evil from the prospect before then. If Emma should accept the son, the rage of his mother would certainly be intense, and if she refused him and accepted Mr. Howard instead, there was but little probability she would be better pleased. All hopes of further advancement from the family patronage would be at an end, and he was not sure that upon the small income his present living afforded him, it would be prudent to marry, as his sister and her little boy were quite dependent on himself. There were Charles'

maintenance at a public school, and his subsequent expenses at the university to be looked forward to and provided for; he had engaged to do this, voluntarily engaged himself, and now that he came seriously to reflect on his position and ties, on the expenses of a married man, and the probabilities of any better future provision, he began to wonder what infatuation had before closed his eyes, and hurried him on against his better judgment, to an affection which threatened so much of care and difficulty. Yet it was hard, very hard to give up the charming hopes with which he had flattered his fancy; he did not feel equal to such a sacrifice; he did not feel positively called to it. For the present he would quit her, but he would make no desperate resolves for the future: when he came nearer that part of his path, he should be better able to tell in which direction his duty would guide him.

When he unexpectedly found himself in Emma's presence, and alone with her, his contending feelings had almost deprived him of self-control, and he had been scarcely conscious what he said or did, though on quitting her, he carried away a decided conviction that he had behaved extremely ill, and no doubt she was disgusted with him. With this pleasing notion he returned

to his house, and his sister soon saw that there was something the matter, by the absence of his mind, and the air of depression which hung over him.

He told her he wanted to leave home for a time, that he thought it would do them both good, that he had been talking to Lord Osborne about it, that he must apply to her ladyship, and that he expected her to refuse. Mrs. Willis was a good deal puzzled by all this, but could obtain from him no more satisfactory answer. Playfully she accused him of having been refused by some lady, which of course he denied; then of having affronted some one by refusing her, which met with a similar answer. Her invention and imagination seemed to go no farther, and she was obliged to be quiet and watchful.

CHAPTER V.

WHILST Lord Osborne was thus hopefully planning, and Mr. Howard despondingly meditating, a very different termination to Emma's visit was impending over her. She was roused from a late and heavy slumber, natural after the sleeplessness of the preceding night, by the receipt of a note from Winston, sent over by a special messenger. Its contents were as follows:—

“ Dear Emma,

“ I am sadly grieved to have to tell you such bad news, but our father has been taken very ill, he had a

seizure last night, up to which time he seemed quite well, and has not recovered his senses since: nor does the doctor lead us to hope that he will. I need not say come home, for I am sure that will be your first wish; I dare say they can send you, as our man is gone down to the village to fetch something for my father's use, and I cannot, therefore, send the pony-chaise.

"Yours, etc.,

"E. WATSON."

Starting up in the greatest dismay, Emma instantly sent an imploring message to Miss Osborne to request an interview with her, and in the meantime hurried over her dressing and other necessary preparations with the greatest possible despatch. Miss Osborne did not make her wait long, showed the most friendly sympathy in her distress, instantly ordered a carriage to take her home, and insisted on her allowing her own maid to arrange Emma's things, whilst she attempted to take some breakfast.

To satisfy her Emma made an effort to eat, but could scarcely swallow a cup of coffee; and as the coachman did not keep her long waiting, in less than an hour

from her receiving Elizabeth's note, she was on her way home. Wrapped up in fearful anticipations of what would meet her there, she had been almost unconscious of what was passing before her eyes; she had an impression that Miss Osborne had been very kind, that just at last her brother had been there also, that he had squeezed her hand at parting, with much warmth, and had said something which she did not understand about wishing to help her; she thought of it for a moment only, and then her mind again reverted to her father's situation, and her sister's distress.

The rapidity with which the journey was now performed, was a most important comfort, very different from the creeping jog-trot of their old horse, and she felt quite thankful that Elizabeth had spared her such torture as would have been caused by the delay their own chaise would have occasioned.

Before Elizabeth was expecting her she was at home, and the door proving to be open, and nobody at hand to receive her, she was obliged to have her few things set down in the passage by the footman, and then dismissed the carriage, before she was able to see any one who could acquaint her with her father's state.

Softly she looked into the parlour, the shutters were open, but the room otherwise bore no symptoms of having been disturbed since last night, the candles were still on the table, the supper tray unremoved, and the chairs all in disorder. She then proceeded up-stairs, and was just on the point of opening the bed-room door, when Elizabeth came out of it. One glance at her face told her that there was no better news in store for her.

Mr. Watson was fast sinking—he lay apparently in a deep slumber, and there seemed no probability of his ever recovering sufficiently to recognise those around him, or to speak again.

Elizabeth had been watching beside him, alternately, with Penelope through the night; the village apothecary had said there was now no more to do; all the remedies his skill could suggest had proved unavailing, and they must patiently wait the result.

Margaret had gone to bed in hysterics, and required Nanny to sit up with her, so that it was a great blessing Penelope had been at home, as she had a head and nerves which were always in good order, and knew as much of medical treatment as the doctor.

At this moment Penelope joined them; she left the patient unchanged; the apothecary and the maid were with him, and hearing Emma's voice, she had come out for a moment to meet her.

"A sad ending to our Osborne Castle festivities, Emma," said she, as she shook her hand; "who would have thought it, when we set out? Elizabeth, don't you think we ought to have better advice? I am certain that man there does not know in the least what he is about; there must be a better doctor at some of the towns round here—Bradford, or somewhere—could not we send for one?"

Elizabeth could not tell; they had never had occasion to send for a physician; and she did not know where one could be found. Emma enquired if notice of their father's danger had been despatched to their brothers; it appeared neither of them had thought of this; but it must be done immediately.

They were about twenty miles from Croydon; and by sending a letter by the mail-coach, which passed through Bradford, they knew Robert would hear the same evening, and might be at Winston easily within twenty-four hours. This much they settled on, and a note was written, and

despatched by a trusty messenger, who was to catch the coach at the inn at Bradford, and then try and bring back a physician with him.

Mr. ——— seemed much relieved when he learnt the project of calling in farther advice, and thus shifting the weight of responsibility from his own shoulders. He thought it probable that the patient might linger many hours, possibly two or three days; and with a promise to return in a few hours, he now took his leave for the present.

It is needless to attempt to describe all the feelings which oppressed the sisters as they sat watching the sick-bed—perhaps the death-bed of their only parent. Hours stole away, bringing no change, and no alleviation of their fears. Margaret did not join the watch; her sensibility, as she designated it, bringing on violent hysterics, which made attention and nursing necessary for her. Emma tried to soothe her, in vain; Penelope was sarcastic and bitter; Elizabeth declared she had no time to attend to her vagaries, and that she would be soon as well as any of them, if she was not meddled with.

About two o'clock they were roused by the sound of carriage wheels at the door,

and Elizabeth stealing into the passage, where a window looked on the entrance, came back with the information that it was a post-chariot, from which a gentleman, dressed like a physician, had alighted, and that there was somebody else in the carriage, but she could not tell who it was.

In another moment, a card was handed into the room, with the name of Dr. Denham on it, a name which they knew belonged to a celebrated physician, residing at many miles distance. Much surprised, the girls hesitated a moment as to the meaning of this, but, of course, decided that the two eldest should descend to the parlour to receive him and his explanation immediately.

After a consultation of about ten minutes, Emma hearing their voices and steps on the stairs, quitted the room of the invalid that she might not be in the way, and when they were safely shut in there, she ran down stairs to refresh herself by a moment's breathing the fresh air.

Great was her surprise on reaching the entrance passage, to see Lord Osborne standing there, and evidently looking about for somebody. Her light footstep instantly caught his ear, and he turned to meet her with eagerness.

"Ha! Miss Watson," cried he, "I hoped to see you here; how's your father, hey—not very bad. I hope."

"Indeed he is," replied Emma, with tears in her eyes.

"Indeed, I am sorry—upon my honour—I'm grieved to hear that," looking quite compassionately at her. "Poor old gentleman—what a pity—I dare say he is a monstrous good fellow—but don't fret—I shall be quite unhappy if I think you are fretting."

Emma scarcely attended to what he was saying.

"How came you here, Lord Osborne?" exclaimed she. "Had you anything to do with Dr. Denham?"

"I'll tell you how it was," replied he, taking hold of her hand, and drawing her towards the parlour door, "only don't stand here in the cold, that's so uncomfortable. There now, sit down there, and let me sit down beside you—and I'll tell you. We know Dr. Denham very well, he's a great friend of my sister's, and she's a great favorite of his—so when she heard your father was ill, she wrote him a note, and sent me with it, to ask him as a great favour to visit Mr. Watson, for her sake—you know—and I fetched him in the car—

riage, so it's only the drive, and he's to take no fee, you see—he just comes from friendship to Rosa, that's all."

"I am sure we are exceedingly obliged to you all," said Emma, colouring from a variety of feelings; "it was very kind of Miss Osborne to think of it, and of you to take so much trouble."

"Do you know it gave me a great deal of pleasure—a very great deal; I don't know when ever I was happier than just while I was thinking of obliging you—I did not mind the trouble in the least."

His eyes were fixed on Emma with a far more eloquent expression than was at all usual with them, and he really seemed to think as he spoke, and to feel particularly happy.

To what extremes of eloquence his new-found felicity might have led him there is now no means of knowing; he was interrupted before he had committed himself by any very pointed declaration, by the sound of the physician's return, which startled Emma into a sudden recollection that to be found by him, sitting *tête-à-tête* and side by side on the sofa with the young nobleman, might perhaps not unreasonably surprise him. She therefore told him she should be wanted in the sick room, and quietly with-

drew; when he, his pleasant reveries broken off thus suddenly, felt himself unequal to meeting any one else with composure, and likewise quitted the room for a seat in the carriage.

As Emma resumed her seat at her father's bedside, she could not for a moment banish the idea which had suddenly entered her mind, that perhaps after all Mr. Howard's jealousy was not ill-founded, and that Lord Osborne did entertain a more than ordinary partiality towards herself. The notion was accompanied with no feeling of self-exaltation; she was positively ashamed that it had intruded itself at such a time, and she felt that had even the moment been more appropriate, the supposition would have given her no pleasure at all. She did not want him to like her for his own sake, and she was annoyed by it for the sake of Mr. Howard's attachment.

But this was not the time when such reflections could or ought to be indulged; it was her business to think of her father, not of herself, and she roused herself to shake them off. As soon as Dr. Denham had taken his leave, her sisters returned to the sick room to tell her what he had said. He had given them no encouragement; had said there was nothing further to be done,

that it was true that while there was breath there was hope, but that Mr. Watson's advanced age and broken health made a recovery most unlikely, and even a temporary return of his intellects extremely improbable.

The next morning brought no alteration in the situation of the patient, but it brought Robert Watson to the house. He came, cool and self-possessed as ever, taken up entirely with facts, not feelings, and looking decidedly as if his mind at least never quitted his office, but was still engrossed with the business there transacting. "Deeds not words," was his motto, but the deeds he delighted in would have been uninteresting to nine-tenths of the world, and seemed rather intended to mystify than benefit mankind.

Emma felt she could not love Robert; she shrank from him, and it needed all her self-command and strong sense of propriety to avoid showing how repulsive she found him. The excessive egotism of his conversation and habits seemed to yield to nothing; no feeling, no softness was evinced by his conduct. There was scarcely an emotion betrayed on seeing his father, and what little was discernible whilst in his sick room, had all vanished before he reached the parlour door.

"Well, I must say this is a most unfortunate thing," said he sitting down in his father's vacant chair and stretching out his feet to the fender; "a most unfortunate thing for me indeed: one might have calculated my father would have lived ten years more—he's not such an old man—ten years at least I had reckoned on, and you see how I am taken in. Heaven knows what is to become of you girls—there will not be more than a thousand pounds to divide between you: and it's so unlucky to happen just now, for of course you must come home to Croydon."

"That would be very unlucky indeed, at any time," cried Penelope; "but I hope not quite inevitable. I shall not live at Croydon, I promise you."

"So much the better, if you have any other plan; three on one's hands are quite enough. There must have been some great mismanagement, or some of you would certainly have married;" and Robert Watson, in a fit of vexation at his sisters' celibacy, stirred the fire into a vehement blaze.

"Well to relieve your mind," replied Pen in a sarcastic tone, "in return for the extraordinary fraternal solicitude you evince, I will inform you I am engaged to be mar-

ried, and expect to be a wife in about a month."

"Are you indeed, my dear sister I congratulate you. What settlements are you to have? If the papers pass through our office I promise you I will pay every attention to see it advantageously arranged for you."

"Your liberality, my dear Robert, is most exemplary, and far beyond what I had ventured to expect of you. But I shall not encroach so far, I assure you. The marriage settlements are preparing at Chichester, and I do not anticipate that it will be even necessary for me to have recourse to the hospitality of yourself and your amiable lady."

She spoke with a strong and bitter emphasis, which Robert could not possibly misunderstand, but which he prudently resolved not to notice.

"It is a very delicate matter to talk of," whispered Margaret, who had now made her appearance, "one from which a young woman of sensibility naturally shrinks; but I will so far overcome my blushing bashfulness, as to inform you, Robert, that I too am engaged to be married, and that, therefore, delighted as I should be to reside with my dear Jane, I

still hope before long to be able to receive her in my own house, and, as Mrs. Tom Musgrove, to return the kindness showed to Margaret Watson."

"*What!*" said Robert, staring at her with undisguised amazement, "are you mad, Margaret."

"Indeed, I hope not," replied she, simpering; "I am engaged to my dear Tom Musgrove, that's all I mean; and no doubt we shall be married in time."

Her brother still looked doubtfully at her, but after a moment's consideration, replied—

"Well, Margaret, if that's the case, you deserve more credit than I had ever thought possible, for I would not have given much for your chance with Tom—but, since you say he is engaged to you, I am heartily glad to hear it. Have you any witnesses? or was the contract in writing?"

"No, it was in the conservatory at Osborne Castle, and as to witnesses, oh, dear Robert, you don't suppose ladies and gentlemen chose to have such tender scenes pass before witnesses," cried Margaret, trying to look very young and sentimental.

"I am sure it would be a deuced deal better if they did," said he, sharply;

there would be much less trouble to their friends; and they would stand a much fairer chance of having the contract fulfilled. However, since it is so, I hope he'll keep his word, for the sake of yourself and your friends. As times go, it's not a bad match."

"A bad match—I should think not," cried Margaret, disdainfully tossing her head. "I only wish all my sisters may make half as good a one, that's all. Tom Musgrove is a man every woman may well envy me."

"I doubt if his income was ever a clear thousand a year, Margaret," replied Robert, as if that were the point on which, in his mind, the advisability of the match entirely rested. "But if he's not in debt, he may do very well. I wish Elizabeth and Emma had equal good luck, to prevent their becoming a burden on their friends."

A burden on their friends! how those words rang in Emma's ears, and grated on all the feelings of her affectionate heart. Was it possible that her brother could not only think of them in this light, but could calmly express the feeling; that he should not only be void of affection, but that even the wish to seem hospitable, kind, or

generous should be wanting. What would be a home in his house—what comforts—what peace could it promise, where such an expression was to meet them ere they crossed his threshold.

Before the colour which these feelings called up had died away from her cheeks, Robert continued—

“Jane is of opinion that there must have been great want of tact and management on your part, Emma, during your visits to the Howards and the Castle, or you might certainly have turned them to better account.”

“I am sorry Jane sees anything to blame in my conduct,” replied Emma, meekly; “but I do not know what she expected of me.”

“I told her she was far too sanguine,” continued Robert; “but she would have it, that, with proper attention, you might have succeeded in securing the young lord. You must have been thrown in his way a good deal; and, certainly, for an unprovided girl like you, it becomes an important duty to omit no opportunity of advancing your own interests, and those of your family, by securing a good establishment when in your power.”

Emma was silent; her prevailing feeling being too lively a sense of indignation to make it safe for her to speak.

"I hope you are not to blame through any culpable negligence; the young lord is to be sure a great ass I believe; but the match would be a capital one for you—the making of your family. I should like of all things to be agent and manager of his property—remember that!"

"I am afraid," replied Emma, struggling to speak calmly, "that if your wish depends for fulfilment on my marrying Lord Osborne, there is but little chance of its being gratified."

"I am sorry to hear it," replied he, gravely; "but I know such desirable alliances are not to be compassed without a little trouble and exertion: and, perhaps, if you were to remain a little longer in the neighbourhood your chance would be better. I'll think about that."

Emma longed to tell him not to trouble himself, but she thought it most prudent to remain silent.

The next time she was alone with the eldest sister, Elizabeth confided to her the extreme satisfaction which the news of Penelope's engagement gave her. It seemed to be quite certain, from what she could

learn, everything was preparing apace, and the marriage would have soon been performed if their father's illness had not interfered. As far as money went, it was decidedly a good match for Pen; and though Elizabeth herself, did not fancy an asthmatic, elderly widower, yet she could not expect every one to have her tastes, and if Penelope herself was satisfied, that was all that could be required.

Emma could not think and feel the same; she wished that her sister should have required more; that she should have been incapable of considering a sufficient jointure to be the principal aim and end of engaging in matrimony.

Something must be wanting—something either of delicacy or principle, which could lead her to such results; and she wondered Elizabeth did not feel this too. Miss Watson then proceeded to discuss Margaret's engagement, which she declared, seemed to her incredible; she told Emma that the night of the ball, whilst returning home, Margaret had, after a great deal of nonsense, announced her engagement with Tom, and declared that he was to come the next day and ask her father's consent. That she evidently expected him herself in the afternoon—having bestowed

uncommon care on her toilette, and persuaded Elizabeth to add another dish to their dinner, in case he should remain the afternoon with them; but that the gentleman had never made his appearance; and in the evening, the seizure of their father had put it all out of her head. She doubted very much now, whether the whole was not a mistake—the illusion of Margaret's vanity, or the consequence of some extra flattery on Tom's part, arising from the excitement of champagne and flirtation. There were two whole days now passed, and he had not been near them—Margaret had written to him yesterday, but had received no answer; and if Elizabeth were in her place, she should certainly not feel satisfied with such conduct.

After a little internal hesitation, Emma told Elizabeth, that so far as the fact of Tom's having proposed and been accepted was concerned, she could herself answer for the truth of Margaret's statement. She related to her, under a promise of secrecy for the present, the circumstance of her own and Miss Osborne's being accidental listeners to the whole occurrence; this, of course, settled the point, but did not diminish the wonder of the girls, both that Mr. Musgrove should have proposed to

Margaret, and that he should since, have taken no further steps in the business. They wondered in vain—and they had not much time to devote to wonder—their father's situation soon recalled their thoughts and demanded all their attention.

But still in the interval of repose, which this occupation necessarily allowed, Emma found her mind continually reverting to past scenes; to the hopes which had once been so pleasant and lively, and the disappointment which had succeeded them. She told herself she must not think of it; she determined that she would not—sometimes she almost persuaded herself that she did not; but she could not regulate her feelings as she wished; and many a time she was unconsciously dwelling on the past, whilst she fancied herself meditating on her present duty.

It was Penelope's turn to remain during dinner with her father, and Emma was once more in company with her repulsive brother. It was really with a sensible reluctance that she sat down to the same table with him—but she struggled against the feeling, aware that it ought to be overcome if there was to be any future peace or comfort for her.

The dinner was more than plain—unfor-

tunately, it was almost entirely cold; but, in the hurry occasioned by the illness of Mr. Watson, the rest of his family might reasonably expect to be less comfortably accommodated than usual. Elizabeth had hardly given the subject a thought; and not at all indeed, until it was too late for amendment, beyond a steak hurriedly cooked for Robert's sake. But this was tough—tough as the table, so Robert said, and he had a particular dislike to cold mutton. His plate was pushed away with an air of uncontrollable disgust—and he sat eyeing the table with gloomy looks, whilst his sister good-humouredly apologised for the hardness of the fare.

“Shall I have the satisfaction of helping you to a little of this cow?” enquired he, balancing his knife and fork in his hand, and pointing with them to the condemned steak. “I recommend you to try it, Elizabeth, and then you may, perhaps, remember another time, and make better provision for such unfortunate individuals as are compelled, through circumstances to become your guests—you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Elizabeth-”

“Upon my word, Robert, I could not help it; I will try and give you a better dinner to-morrow; but it's not my fault en-

tirely, that the steak is tough. I thought, perhaps, it would be; but it was the only thing we could dress—and I thought you would like that better than nothing.”

“I cannot comprehend such bad management—why is not your cook to dress a dinner for me?—what else had she to do of more importance?—she *cannot* be wanted by my father! For *me*—you will look very blank, I expect, when you come to live with me, if I set you down to such fare as this!”

Elizabeth had the sense and the forbearance to remain perfectly silent; and Robert, finding that all his indignation could not overcome impossibilities, or cook him a dinner where the materials were actually wanting, thought it best to make some attempts at eating; and proceeded, with an air of injured dignity, to devour the unfortunate subject of his wrath.

“I think, Jane would be rather astonished if she knew what sort of dinner I have been compelled to make,” was his observation when he laid down his knife and fork. “She would hardly expect to find me dining so contentedly off a tough old steak—ill-cooked, and no sauce. I always have observed in most houses, here especially, none are so badly provided for as the eldest sons.

I suppose any thing is good enough for them—it does not signify what I eat at all—I am only your brother—only the head of the house—only the man on whom you will be dependent when—but no matter, I hope you will fare better in my house, that's all!"

"I am very sorry," repeated Elizabeth, "I know it's very disagreeable to have a bad dinner, but I hope it will not happen again, and I'll try and get you something you will like for supper; a broiled fowl and an omelette—could you fancy that, Robert?"

Robert assented; but his wrath was evidently mollified at the promise, and no more was said about the unfortunate dinner at that time.

Another day put a period to their suspense, and confirmed their worst anticipation. Mr. Watson was no more; and his four daughters were left to all the evils which Robert had so providentially pointed out to them. Their feelings and their manner of expressing them, were as different as their characters, and their ways of thinking. Emma, who knew the least of him, certainly experienced the greatest grief—Elizabeth mourned too—but there were so many things for her to think of—much to plan and arrange—so much of

economy to be mingled with a wish of doing every thing as handsomely as possible, that she had no time to cultivate sorrow as a duty, or indulge in its appearance as a recreation. Emma was active and useful likewise—but she busied herself in spite of her grief—Miss Watson grieved only in the intervals of her business.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN first Robert came to Winston, Elizabeth had consulted him on the subject of sending for Sam, but her brother opposed it. Emma had listened in silent anxiety to the debate, and in keen disappointment to its termination. From her sister's conversation, she had an ardent desire to meet her unknown brother; she expected to be able to like him—Elizabeth had, in speaking of him, told many little traits of character, which convinced her that he must possess a generous disposition and an affectionate heart; she longed to see him—to know him—to be loved by him.

But Robert had decided that though he

was, of course, to be informed of his father's illness, there was no need to say any thing which should induce him to come himself—no doubt, it would be excessively inconvenient to his master—a needless expense to himself—perfectly undesirable in every way, and quite unnecessary; for, of what use could Sam be when Robert himself was there. He was nobody—a younger son—the most unimportant being in the world. As to his wishing to see his father again, what did that signify? People could not always have what they wished for—young men in their apprenticeship must not look for holidays; he was sure *he* should never have thought of any thing of the sort whilst he was serving his articles; and now, how seldom did he ever take a holiday from the office? Let Sam look to him and his application to business, if he wanted an example of steadiness and good conduct.

But Emma's wish to see her brother was not fated to be entirely disappointed, for no sooner did he receive the news of his father's death, than he obtained leave of absence from his master without difficulty, and arrived unexpectedly at Winston. She was sitting alone in the darkened parlour, when an unknown step arrested her attention; it was not the slow, measured conse-

quential tread of Robert; it was quicker, lighter, more like one which had sometimes made her heart beat before; at least so she fancied for a moment, perhaps only because she had just been thinking of him. The footstep passed the door, then paused, returned and entered slowly.

It was not more than the doubt of a moment, as to the identity of the intruder; there was so strange a family likeness on each side, a likeness of more than features, a likeness in mind and temper, a sympathy of feeling, that the hesitation of the brother and sister was brief indeed.

"My dear Emma, how I have longed to see you," cried he advancing, "I am your youngest brother, will you not welcome me?"

The cordial, fraternal embrace with which the words were accompanied, overcame her firmness, and she burst into tears in his arms. He was much affected likewise, but struggled for composure in order to soothe her, opened the window to give her air, brought her a glass of water from the side-board, and then sitting down with his arm round her waist, drew from her all the circumstances of his father's death, and learnt that it was Robert's doing that that he had not been summoned sooner.

That hour repaid Emma for much that she had suffered mentally in her father's house. She had found a friend in her brother. The dearest, the least selfish, the most equal bond which nature ties; children of the same parents, sharing the same fears, the same sorrows; from that moment was laid the foundation of an affection which added so greatly to her happiness; feelings till then sleeping unknown in her heart, were suddenly awakened; and affections which almost unconsciously had been craving for subsistence, having now found an aliment to nourish and satisfy them, grew rapidly into strength and beauty.

One hour's delightful intercourse was theirs, before they were interrupted by the rest of the family; but when her other sisters entered the room, Emma could not but wonder at the indifference with which he was received both by Pen and Margaret, and imputing to him the sensitive feelings of her own heart, felt doubly pained by each cold word or careless look bestowed on her new brother.

Robert's reception, however, was the worst of all.

"So you are come, are you—hum," that was his salutation.

"Yes," replied Sam quietly, "of course you were expecting me!"

"A most needless waste of time and money, I must say—a young fellow not out of his apprenticeship, has no right to be flying over the country in this way, without any suitable reason."

Sam controlled himself so far as not to answer.

"It's throwing away your master's time in a most unjustifiable way."

"Excuse me, Robert, Mr. Allen voluntarily gave me permission to come here, and most kindly made me master of my own time for a week."

"Quite unnecessary, whilst you are an apprentice."

"I believe *he* thought that even an apprentice might have feeling," replied Sam with emphasis.

"You might at least have asked my opinion, I think—as your elder brother you might have consulted me, before incurring so much expense."

"Robert, I am accountable to Mr. Allen alone for my time—as to my pecuniary affairs, I am not answerable to you; and as to coming to this house, Elizabeth, who is mistress here, has told me I am welcome, and I require no more from any one. My

sense of duty led me here, but depend upon it, I will ask *your* leave, before I intrude on your house at Croydon."

Robert turned away, and had recourse to his usual expedient when vexed, namely, stirring the fire into a vehement blaze. It was in pursuance of a system of counter-irritation, by creating a greater degree of external warmth, no doubt he counteracted the internal heat from which he was suffering.

The whole of the week which Sam spent at home, was one of consolation and comfort to poor Emma; he listened to all she could tell him, made her describe her past life, talked of her uncle and aunt, questioned her as to the effects of her change, entered into her feelings, anticipated what they must have been, sympathised warmly in them all, and was in fact a true, warm-hearted brother to the forlorn girl. Together they talked of their father, praised his amiable disposition, sorrowed for his loss; then Sam told her his prospects and wishes, confided to her his attachment to Mary Edwards, and his wavering hopes of success; his plans for his future subsistence, and his anticipations of the brilliant success which was to await him in his profession.

Emma's future prospects likewise were canvassed. He could not bear the idea of her having to reside with Robert and his wife."

"You will tell me it's wrong, I dare say," said he, "but I detest Mrs. Robert, she is so self-sufficient, so cold-hearted, and so insincere—indeed I wish her no ill, Emma, I am not malicious; my detestation does not go so far as that, but I cannot wish her to have your society for a constancy—it would be thrown away on her, and she would torment you to death."

"Oh no, I hope not; I trust if my home must be there, that I shall have strength of mind and patience to bear with her. You must not weaken my mind by commiseration; you should rather teach me to look forward with hope, or at least resignation; do not pity me, that does me harm."

Sam protested that Emma was in every respect much too good for such a situation, and that the moment he had a house and an income, however small, she should share it with him. Her promise to do so was as cordially given as it was required, and her heart already felt lighter and happier from her acquaintance with her dear brother.

When their father's will came to be ex-

amined, it appeared that it was dated three years previously, and that of the sum of two thousand pounds, which Mr. Watson had to bequeath, neither Emma or Robert were to receive any share. The latter had already been put in possession of all that he could reasonably expect, his father having made considerable advances to establish him in business, and at the time when the will was made, every one supposed Emma would be provided for by her uncle, and though that expectation had been entirely frustrated, it seemed that Mr. Watson had never summoned sufficient energy to alter his will, and give her any share in the little he possessed.

It did not transpire whether Robert was much disappointed at finding he was to have no further benefit from being the eldest son; perhaps the idea that Emma, by becoming entirely dependent on him, would be liable to be subject to all his caprices, and might be made a complete slave of in his house, soothed away the bitterness of his mortification. He took leave of the family immediately, and returned to Croydon, having arranged, that when everything was settled at Winston, three of his sisters should follow him there; Penelope professing it to be her intention to return to Chi-

chester as soon as she conveniently could. Sam's week was not yet expired, and he remained with his sisters. The morning after Robert's departure, as Emma and her brother were sitting together, Margaret joined them, and sitting down beside Sam, told him with a consequential air, that she wanted very much to consult him.

"Well, Margaret, what can I do for you?" enquired he kindly.

"I want your advice on an affair of great importance, Sam, and you must promise to give it to me."

"Readily, Margaret, that's a thing you know everybody likes to be asked for, so come, let's have the whole history—I will not even require you to follow my advice when I have given it: that would be too much altogether."

"Well, listen; I am engaged to be married—what do you think of that?"

"I will tell you when I know who it is."

"Oh, I assure you it is a very desirable match, a most excellent young man—so amiable, and fashionable, and clever, as you will at once allow when you hear it is—Mr. Tom Musgrove!"

"Tom Musgrove—indeed, I am surprised, Margaret—that he should marry,

and marry you, would, I own, astonish me."

"But I tell you it is a fact, Sam, we are engaged beyond all doubt, and why you *should* be surprised at *my* being his choice, I cannot understand."

"I beg your pardon, Margaret, tell me what you want my advice about—not as to accepting him I presume?"

"No, indeed—but I am in an unfortunate situation; I am so miserable; ever since the happy night at Osborne Castle, when he plighted his troth to me, we have not met, and I have heard nothing of him."

"That is very extraordinary, Margaret—nothing at all—and can you not account for it?"

"No, otherwise than I am sure he is ill—nothing else could be the reason of such unexampled silence. It was after supper when he made the offer, and I cannot help fearing that the champagne and the lobster salad may have been too much for his constitution."

"Did he take much champagne then?"

"Much—no, not much, that is, not enough to—to—just you know to raise his spirits a good deal; I did not count the glasses!"

"And it was then he proposed to you—are you sure he was sober at the time, Margaret?"

"What questions you ask, Sam—sober! you quite shock me—remember you are talking to a young lady."

"Well, I will not forget that, but really I don't see anything so bad in the question, and I know no more delicate way of putting it to suit you: are you sure he was not drunk at the time?—will that do?"

"Upon my word—worse and worse, as if I should talk to a man who was drunk, what do you take me for?"

"I am sorry to offend you, my dear sister, but I have known Tom Musgrove a long time, and some times seen him very drunk. Indeed, in my opinion, he is just the sort of man to make a fool of himself first, and then of any girl who would listen to him."

"How excessively unkind you are, Sam," pouted Margaret, apparently on the point of crying- "I am quite sure you are wrong. Tom never could or would make a fool of me. He is not the sort of man at all; but, as I have have heard nothing of him since that evening, I wish you to go and call on him—tell him how much pleased you are to hear of the engagement, and beg him to

come and see me—there is no occasion to shut him out of the house, though we do not admit other visitors.”

“That’s your plan, is it? But suppose he declines altogether—suppose he should say it was a dream on your part—a delusion—a mistake; suppose that is the reason of his silence, what am I to do then?”

“Oh! if he were to do that, you must challenge him! You could not do less for such an insult to your sister, you must send him a challenge, and I could bring an action against him for breach of promise!”

“Well, if you mean to do that, I think I had better let the challenge alone; because the one might interfere with the other; if I were to shoot him, you know your action could not be brought.”

“Do you mean that you will not do as I ask you?”

“Indeed I do.”

“Then I think you most unkind and ungenerous; I always understood it was a brother’s duty to fight with every man who insulted his sister or broke an engagement to her.”

“But, allowing us such high privileges, my dear Margaret, I think I am justified in

requiring proof; first, that the engagement was made; secondly, that it has been broken. I am not clear yet on either of these points."

"I see what it is, you are determined not to help me; and I think it very ill-natured and cowardly of you to stand by and see your sister insulted and robbed of her best affections, and not interfere the least for her sake."

"Indeed, my dear Margaret, I cannot see that my interference has the least chance of doing any good; if Tom was serious and sober, he will need no intervention of mine to remind him of his promises; if he was drunk and did not know what he was saying, the less that is publicly known of such a transaction, the better in every respect for your dignity."

"I see you will not take my part—you are no use at all; I shall just take my own way, and see if I consult you in a hurry again."

Whilst the silence and indifference of Margaret's lover, gave her so much concern—the attention and assiduity of Emma's, occasioned almost as much excitement in the mind of the latter. Not a day had passed without Lord Osborne either calling himself at the door, or sending a groom

with a joint message of inquiry from his sister and himself; several kind little notes had been received from the young lady, expressing concern and sympathy, and it was quite evident that they did not wish to drop the acquaintance. Nothing had been seen of Mr. Howard; but a note from Mrs. Willis, assured Emma that they had heard every day through Lord Osborne or they would have sent more frequently to enquire for her welfare.

This was consolatory, as serving to convince her that she was not forgotten at the parsonage; but she could not help murmuring a little to herself, that Mr. Howard should have so entirely withdrawn from personal intercourse. Sam had received from her, a minute history of her acquaintances at the Castle and Parsonage; and when he subsequently became aware of the visits of Lord Osborne, he immediately formed the very natural conclusion that the young peer must be in love with his sister.

Emma appeared to him so pretty and so amiable, that her being loved was the most simple and probable event; and he only wished that Lord Osborne had been more worthy of her; but the peerage and fortune of the supposed lover, did not quite blind the

brother's eyes to the fact, that their owner was not distinguished by any characteristic worthy of his high birth ; and Sam could not wish his sister to sacrifice domestic happiness for the glitter of a coronet, or the *harmony* of a title. She must have a husband who united mental and moral qualifications to those of birth, wealth and station ; and if he possessed the means of advancing Sam himself in his profession, it would be so much the better.

"Did you ever, in your life, see such a fool as Margaret makes of herself, Sam?" was Penelope's observation one day, when the whole family were sitting together. "She will persist in asserting that she is engaged to Tom Musgrove, though I have taken the trouble of ascertaining that he has left home, and the servants are not sure whether he is gone to London or Bath. I asked the baker's boy to enquire, in order to set her mind at ease. I must say, I think her story very incompatible with facts."

"I am sure I am necessarily obliged to you, Penelope, for your kind way of speaking to me ; but I know very well what it is, you are all envious of my good luck, and that's the reason you will none of you be-

lieve me; but, some day, I shall pay you off, you will see."

"In the mean time, I will give you ample credit, Margaret, feeling confident you will never forget a debt of that kind; but, if you are Mrs. Tom Musgrove six months hence, I will admit that I know nothing of you—nothing of Tom—nothing of men in general, and that I am little better than an idiot."

"I do not see why you should doubt it at all," cried Elizabeth, interposing, "I am sure I believe it entirely, don't you Emma?"

"The gentleman is probably gone to London to give instructions for preparing the settlements," observed Sam, gravely, preventing, by his interposition, any necessity for Emma to answer her eldest sister's question.

Margaret assented to this proposition, and Penelope took no further trouble to vex her at that moment.

Meantime all the necessary arrangements for the girls quitting their old home were made, with all possible despatch. Margaret indeed took no interest in the proceedings, contenting herself with wandering about, and fretting for Mr. Musgrove; but the

others were busy from the time Sam left them; and towards the end of a month, the time for removing to Croydon, began to be discussed. Pen still held to her resolution of not visiting her brother, she determined to return to her friend at Chichester, and marry from her house; and she announced that the marriage would take place within a few weeks of her quitting her home.

Emma was sorry at parting with her—she had got over the shock which her coarse manners had at first inflicted; and they had always agreed very well since the day at Osborne Castle. In fact, what Penelope had observed there of the kindness and attention which Emma received from that family had greatly raised her sister in importance in her mind; a girl so much noticed and liked by people who had never stooped to them before must be worth agreeing with; and as there was everything in Emma's own manners and temper to recommend her to the kindly disposed, Penelope had always avoided quarrelling with her, as she constantly did with her other sisters. Consequently, Emma could not help wishing it was Margaret who was going to Chichester, and Pen who was to share their home at Croydon.

Things, however, were really better arranged than she could have ordered them, for it would have been impossible for Penelope and Jane Watson to have continued in the same house, without the certain destruction of the peace of all around. There was no one in the neighbourhood to regret, excepting Mrs. Willis, for Emma would not allow even to herself that the separation from Mr. Howard gave her any concern; and it was a satisfaction to quit the vicinity of Osborne Castle, and the scenes where she had been so happy. The Osborne family were all gone to town without her having seen anything more of them; or the suit of the young nobleman having made any progress. She did not expect ever to see them again. Her own plan for the future was to try to procure a situation as teacher in a boarding school, or private governess; anything by which she could feel she was earning the food she eat, in preference to becoming as her brother expressed it, a burden on his family. She began now to comprehend more fully than she had done before, what an evil poverty might be, and felt a vivid sensation of regret that her uncle had left her so entirely dependent on others after giving her an education which quite unfitted her for

filling the situation of humble companion to her sister-in-law.

She struggled to suppress the feeling that she had been unjustly and unkindly dealt with, but it would intrude, to her great discomfort.

But though there were few people to regret amongst her associates, there were sufficient discomforts and worries of other kinds attending their removal. The dismantling of their old home—the sale of the furniture—a portion of which was taken by the succeeding rector, the rest was to be disposed of by auction; the disputes about dilapidations; the finding situations for their servants; the vain attempts to procure a purchaser amongst their acquaintance for their old horse, even the parting with the house-dog and their two cows made Emma sorrowful. Added to all this was the incessant repining of Margaret, who was fretting herself almost into a decline, at the disappearance of Tom Musgrove, and the ill-natured letters of Robert Watson, who regularly quarrelled with everything Elizabeth did or did not do; who disputed all their proposals, and suggested nothing but impossibilities himself.

Emma could not make up her mind on

another point, and this was an additional worry to her. She knew that Margaret's assertions were correct, that Tom Musgrove had really made the offer which no one else believed, and she doubted whether it was not her duty to support her sister's declarations by her testimony. But this threatened to involve so great an evil, that she shrank from it; it was evident that had Robert been aware she was a witness to the proceeding, he would immediately have taken advantage of the fact to compel Tom to fulfil his promise, or threaten him with an action, in case he refused. Margaret seemed likewise to be much inclined to this course, as the determined silence and prolonged absence of her lover naturally gave her doubts of his fidelity. The idea was horrible to Emma, and the possibility of her having to appear in a court of justice was most overpowering. Elizabeth, with whom she consulted on the subject, and who, from her partiality to Emma, was far more inclined to consider her feelings than those of Margaret, advised her, for the present, at least, to hold her tongue, and see how the affair would be settled without her intervention, and from not knowing what better to do, Emma finally decided to take her sister's advice.

At length, just before quitting Winston, she had a farewell visit from Mrs. Willis and her brother, whose plan for leaving home, she was already aware, had been renounced. The lady was the same as ever, friendly and warm in her manners; but Mr. Howard looked pale and ill, and was evidently out of spirits. The visit was short; and when they parted, Emma found the interview had only added an additional pang to all the sufferings she had previously endured.

And thus, for a second time, was Emma Watson driven out from the home where she had vainly hoped to find a continued shelter, and a second time compelled to look for protection from strange relatives. It was strange that though at this moment she really had more subjects of anxiety, more sources of depression and sorrow, she bore it so much better than the first. Then she had seemed overwhelmed—now strengthened by the blow. She was learning to see life, its duties, and its trials, in a new light; she discovered that suffering was not an accidental circumstance, like a transitory illness, to be cured and forgotten as soon as possible; it was the condition of life itself—peace was the exception—and she had enjoyed her share; henceforth, she

must look forward to trial and endurance, she must struggle as millions had struggled before her, and learn to draw contentment not from circumstances but from temper of mind.

Conscious that whilst in her brother's house she should probably have much to bear, she sought for strength greater than her own to go through with it; and endeavoured by viewing her expected trials, as a system of mental discipline which would benefit her, if well supported, to bring her mind into a frame to endure them with patience.

CHAPTER VII.

THE journey to Croydon was safely performed and as expeditiously as could be expected by three young ladies and a quantity of luggage travelling through cross roads with post-horses. Margaret was quite at home in the streets of Croydon and its neighbourhood, and pointed out to whom the various houses belonged with a feeling of exultation, as if knowing the names of the owners when her sisters did not were the next thing to possessing them herself. The bright green door, with its brass-handled bell, was easily recognised by the large plate bearing the owner's name which adorned it.

The door was opened by a footman who informed them that master was at the office, missus was out in the town, but they could step into the drawing-room whilst they waited for her return. With evident non-chalance, and something like insolence, he assisted the post-boy to unload the carriage, and summoning the house-maid, enquired if she knew what was to be done with all *them* things. The waiting-woman decided that nothing could be ventured on till the missus came home; she had changed her mind so often about the rooms, that it was quite uncertain what would be settled on at last; and if she should happen to alter her arrangements whilst she was out, it was evident they would have had all their trouble for nothing. The three girls were therefore sentenced to sit in the parlour during the interval, which Emma could not help feeling might have been more profitably employed in unpacking and arranging their property.

There was little to amuse them during their temporary confinement. A copy of "The Lady's Magazine," containing the recent Parisian fashions, was instantly seized on by Margaret; a cookery-book and a child's doll were lying beside it, and a cat and a kitten were reposing on the hearth-

rug, which, judging from its texture and the ugliness of its pattern, was probably the work of some domestic needle. Some uncommonly rare paintings hung against the walls—rare from the total want of taste harmony and merit which they displayed. Beside them were two most striking portraits which were considerably labelled as intending to represent the master and mistress of the house, thereby preventing such mistakes as to identity as might have occurred. The carpet was faded, the chairs and couch covered with slippery black horse-hair, bumping up into hard offensive things called cushions; the table was covered with green-baize much stained with wine, and the easy chair by the fire showed the exact spot where the owner was accustomed to repose his powdered and pomatumed head.

Presently the door opened and the little girl appeared. Margaret instantly rushed up to embrace her, but the child, who seemed peculiarly self-possessed for her age, repulsed her.

"I did not come here to see you, aunt Margaret," said she. "Which is Emma?"

"I am," said Emma advancing, and pleased to be called for.

Her niece considered her attentively with an air of surprise, then said,

"But you are quite tidy and clean—not ragged and dirty!"

"No my dear," replied Emma smiling at her puzzled look; "why did you expect to see me otherwise?"

"Because the people my nurse tells me are beggars in the street go without shoes, and wear old clothes."

Emma coloured slightly and made no reply, but Margaret, pressing forwards, again asked what that had to do with aunt Emma.

"Papa and mama said she was a beggar, and I thought she would look like them—but she is nice and looks good, and I will not mind you teaching me at all: will you make me pretty frocks?—mama said you should."

"I shall be very glad, love," replied Emma, "to do anything I can for you and your mama too; will you sit on my knee and tell me what I shall make your frocks of?"

Whilst Emma was making friends with her little niece, Mrs. Robert Watson herself arrived. She received her sisters-in-law with more cordiality than Emma expected from the epithet applied to herself, which the child had just betrayed. In fact she was rather pleased than otherwise at this

accession to her family ; she felt that she had secured a careful assistant to the cook in Elizabeth, who was well versed in the mysteries of pastry and custards, cakes, jellies, and raised pies ; and in Emma she hoped to find a competent nursery-governess who would relieve her of all cares as to the child, and supply, unsalaried, the place of the nurse-maid, to whom, under this impression, she had already given warning.

After chatting some time with them, she rang for the house-maid to show them to their rooms, and the child declared she would accompany them as aunt Emma's room was close to the nursery. And so Emma found it was, for she was shown into a small closet containing a bed with room to walk round it, an old chest of drawers and a high stool. This was her apartment. There was no chimney, and the window looked out upon a small space of flat leads, surmounted by high, black, tiled roofs. It had commenced raining since they entered the house, and the gurgle of the water in the gutter, and drip from the window on the leads had a peculiarly monotonous sound. Emma looked at the forlorn and cheerless closet, and felt she was a beggar indeed. She hoped, however, that when her boxes and books were brought up she

should be able to make it a little more comfortable; at least she had it to herself, and should be able to pass her time there in peace.

Her niece dragged her off to see the nurseries—the two rooms devoted to her occupied the rest of that floor, they were spacious and in every respect comfortable, except that they were littered with play-things which their owner apparently had not learnt to value.

As it drew near to the dinner-hour Emma ventured down stairs, and found her brother and his wife in the parlour. Robert received her in his usual manner: in another moment her two sisters entered, and they sat round the fire whilst waiting for dinner.

“I hope you like your rooms, girls,” said Mrs. Watson; “I thought it would not matter putting Elizabeth and you together, Margaret, because I know it’s only for a time. I have heard—a little bird whispered to me a certain story which you need not blush about—of a certain young man—I know who—and I am sure I congratulate you: when did you hear from him last, my dear?”

“Oh, my dear Jane I have not heard from him at all. Ever since the evening when he proposed he has disappeared from

the country, and I cannot find out where he is gone, nor induce him to make any answer to my repeated letters."

"Indeed! that's very odd—do you think he means to break his engagement?"

"I cannot tell what he means, for my own part; I think some one has been slandering me to him, telling him things to my disadvantage, or perhaps intercepting one of my letters. Oh, I have thought of a thousand reasons for his silence, without charging him with infidelity, and I console myself with the hope that when the romantic interruption to our correspondence is removed, and the mystery which now envelops the affair is cleared away, that I shall find he has been suffering as much from the misunderstanding as myself."

"I am sure I hope you may—but are you certain there is no mistake on your part?" said her sister-in-law; "are you sure that he really proposed to you?"

"I am as positive of the fact," said Margaret, "as I ever was of anything in my life."

"Well that is a good deal," observed Robert, "for you can be pretty positive when you please. But I only wish, if it's true, you had had some witnesses—then I could have helped you."

"Would you have called him out?" enquired his wife in a tone of indifference which quite startled Emma.

"No, I should have called him *in*," said Robert laughing, "if the fellow refused to marry her, I would have had him up for a breach of promise, without ceremony."

"And what should I get for that?" said Margaret eagerly.

"You might perhaps have got a couple of thousands—I think I would lay the damages at three."

"Only three, Robert! I am sure that is not enough for deceiving me, robbing me of my best affections, betraying my trust—oh, three thousand pounds would be no compensation for such conduct, no adequate compensation. I am sure my heart is worth more than that."

"I dare say you think so, Margaret," replied Robert coolly; "but you might not persuade a jury to think it likewise; there would be the difficulty."

"But would you really go to law about it?" enquired Emma. "Only think how it would make you talked about."

"Well, so much the better," replied Margaret sharply; "why should I mind that? I am not afraid of being spoken of."

"It would be much better to make him

pay damages than compel him to marry you," observed Elizabeth. "I always wonder women venture to do that—I should be afraid he would beat me afterwards."

"Two or three thousand pounds would secure you a respectable husband, Margaret," continued Robert. "My friend, George Millar, would perhaps take you then."

"I think I would rather marry Tom Musgrove than anybody," replied Margaret. "George Millar is only a brewer, after all, and Tom is a gentleman and has nothing to do."

"But Millar has a capital business, I can tell you," cried Mrs. Watson; "I should not mind my own sister marrying him. Why I know he used to allow his late wife more than a hundred a month to keep the table and find herself in gowns—a very pretty allowance—and very pretty gowns she used to wear."

"Aye, George Millar could count thousands for Musgrove's hundreds," said Robert, "and a capital fellow he is. I only wish you might have such luck as to marry him, either of you girls."

The conversation was interrupted by the dinner, which was a welcome sight to the hungry travellers, who had tasted nothing

since their early breakfast at Winston. Their brother looked at the table with evident pride.

"Well, Elizabeth, I promised you rather a better dinner than you gave me at Winston, observed he. He had the habit of reverting to past grievances.

"You have kept your word too," replied she good-humouredly.

"Oh, my dear creature," cried Jane, "Robert told me of the shocking dinner he had—poor fellow, you certainly always managed very badly about such things; perhaps it might do you no harm if I gave you some lessons; I have rather a genius for housekeeping—at least so my friends tell me—my uncle Sir Thomas used to like me to order his dinner."

"My dear Jane, I am afraid your instructions would be quite wasted on me, unless you would give me your income to supply my wishes—when any one allows me a hundred a month for the table expenses, I will give capital dinners," said Elizabeth.

"You are not thinking of what you are doing, Jane," said her husband reproachfully, "you know I cannot eat the wing of a fowl unless it is torn properly—Emma, I'll trouble you to cut some bacon—good heavens, I cannot eat it so thick as that—

you are not helping a Winston plough boy remember!"

Emma endeavoured to comply but she grew nervous, and her brother was angry, and sent for the dish that he might help himself. Emma coloured and apologised.

"You should try to oblige, Emma," said Jane coolly, "a little pains bestowed on such things, is quite as useful and essential to good breeding as painting or books. Careless ways of carving are very detrimental to the comfort of a family, and though it may seem of no importance to you, it makes all the difference to a delicate palate—one used to the niceties of life—a gentleman in fact."

Emma *felt*, though she did not say, that there was no delicacy of feeling, whatever there might be of palate, in her sister-in-law—but she wisely held her tongue on the subject.

After dinner the little girl made her appearance, and immediately required of her mother a share in the walnuts on the table.

"My precious one, you must have them peeled for you."

"Yes, mama, peel them."

"No, my darling, they stain my fingers

—ask your aunt Emma, I dare say she will do it.”

The child crept to Emma,

“Good-natured aunt, peel me some walnuts.”

Emma readily agreed to do so, wishing, so far as lay in her power, to shew that she really was anxious to oblige. The little girl seated herself on her knee, and endeavoured at first to assist in the operation, but soon relinquished the attempt, and contented herself with slyly dropping the walnut shells down Emma’s neck, and slipping them under her gown, a playful trick which amused her mother excessively when she discovered it, and gave Emma the trouble of going to her room to undress, before she could free herself from the disagreeable sensations they occasioned.

The conversation before dinner still dwelt heavy in her mind; she felt persuaded that the time would come, when she and Miss Osborne too must step forward to prove the truth of her sister’s words, and she shuddered at the idea. She felt that she must make some apology, or at least some announcement of her intentions to Miss Osborne, before she could venture to risk such very unpleasant con-

sequences to them both: and she determined to write to her, and tell her the circumstances as they occurred, and ask her to support and substantiate her word when it came to be questioned

Her head was too weary and dizzy to undertake anything of the kind that night, but she resolved not to defer it very long for Margaret's sake.

A day or two passed on, and Emma began to wonder when she should find time for writing the projected letter. Her sister-in-law kept her so fully employed, that a spare quarter of an hour was not to be had; her talents with needle and scissors had attracted Jane's observation when at Winston, and now they were put into constant requisition in mending the child's wardrobe, or improving the mother's. Her niece's lessons were likewise turned over to her, for she was to learn her alphabet, her parents expecting her to be a little prodigy, and Emma must spare no pains to produce the desired result. Take this as a specimen of their usual routine.

"I wish, Elizabeth, now you seem to be at leisure," said Jane entering the parlour, "you would just go and teach my cook to make those custard puddings, and if you would put her in the way of making almond

cakes, such as you had at your father's, I should thank you. We have some friends coming to tea, and I should like them to taste those.

Elizabeth, who was just taking up her needle to mend a garment of her own, very good-temperedly put it away, and repaired to the kitchen to superintend her sister's confectionary affairs.

"Now, Emma," cried Jane, turning to her, "I'll call Janetta, and you shall give her a lesson, I should like her to know the 'Busy Bee' to say to the visitors to-night."

"That little darling," exclaimed Margaret, as her sister brought in the child, "has quite her mother's talents—my sweet pet," stroking down her hair as she spoke, "my little beauty will grow up a clever, good woman like mama some day, will you not, dearest."

"Like me, dearest Margaret? do not wish her such an evil, a poor weak creature like me—the child of impulse, the slave of excitement. May she be better and happier than her poor mother!"

Emma commenced the painful task of cramming infant brains with what they could not comprehend, for exhibition to people who did want to hear it. Jane shewed

Margaret a piece of work she wanted done, and then threw herself into a lounging chair.

"Who do you expect here this evening, Jane?" enquired Margaret, "I did not know you meant to have company."

"It's a country client of my husband's who is coming to dine," replied Mrs. Watson, "and I asked one or two friends to meet him; one cannot very well help that, or else I don't know that just now, considering how lately your old father died, that I should have had any company—but Mr. Terry is a man of much influence!"

All Emma's sensitive feelings recoiled at this indifferent reference to their recent loss; that he was *Robert's* father likewise, did not seem to occur to his wife, who had never looked on him with either affection or respect. Meantime the little Janetta—for such was her niece's name, made but small progress towards acquiring the much desired learning; and presently, her mother, turning sharply round, cried out:—

"I am sure, Emma, you are taking no pains about that child—for she is so quick in general, at learning any thing; I must say, considering the circumstances, and the

liberality with which your brother has received you, it is not asking such a very wonderful favor, requesting you to attend a little to his child."

"I am sure, I am very happy to do so," replied Emma, meekly; "but your little girl does not seem disposed to attend to me."

"That must be the fault of your manner of instructing then; you do not adopt an interesting way; but I have observed, constantly, where most gratitude is due, least is paid; Janetta, darling, does not your aunt teach you nicely?"

"I want to look at aunt Emma's watch," replied the child, "I hear it ticking in her pocket, and she says I must not see it till I have done!"

"How came you by a watch, Emma?" enquired Mrs. Watson, in a tone which seemed to imply a suspicion of its being honestly acquired. "Let me see it!"

"It was a gift from my uncle," replied poor Emma, producing it rather unwillingly.

It was a very handsome one, and had her name engraved inside the lid.

"I want a watch very much—mine is not to my taste," observed Mrs. Watson,

greedily eyeing her sister-in-law's property. "You would not like to exchange, would you, Emma?"

"Certainly not," replied she hastily; "it was a keepsake from him, and I would not willingly part with it for any thing."

"Don't you think you had better take Janetta to the nursery?" said Mrs. Watson, "I am sure she would learn a great deal better there than here, where we are talking. There, darling, go with Emma like a pet."

Emma saw that her sister-in-law wanted to get rid of her, but she really thought the quiet of the nursery would be preferable to the drawing-room worries, and she gladly withdrew.

"I don't quite understand that sister of yours, Margaret," said Jane, as soon as they were left together; "I think she seems very proud and unpleasant—a good deal of conceit and pertness, mingled in her manner."

"Exactly so, dear Jane, with your usual candour and penetration, you have precisely described her character."

"Yes," said Mrs. Watson, with an air of great satisfaction, "I hope I can see through people a little. If there is one quality I

pride myself on, it is my penetration. I am blessed, I acknowledge, with a singular facility for discerning characters, and what I think I must say. I speak my feelings almost unconsciously!"

"You are a wonderfully clever creature, Jane; I am sure I never knew any one to be compared to you; but, as to Emma, I think it's her intimacy with the Osbornes that has set her up so abominably; really, since she has been there so much, there is no speaking to her sometimes."

"That is often the case where young girls are much noticed by those above them in rank, Margaret; I wonder what they saw in her to like so much—even if they thought her pretty—which I do not—I don't see why they should notice her for that—do you think Lord Osborne liked her?"

"I really don't know—he used to look at her—and he danced with her—and called on her—I sometimes thought he did care for her."

"I wish I could devise any means of bringing them together; if I were quite sure on that point, it would make a great difference; but I don't suppose anything will come of it now. There's the postman's knock—just step out in the passage and

bring in the letters here ; I know Mr. Watson is out, so I can get a peep at his dispatches now."

Margaret did as she was desired and returned presently with a handful of letters. Mrs. Watson took them on her lap and examined the post-mark and address of each. Several were, from their size and appearance, letters of business—she put them aside—over one she paused :

" Here's one in a lady's hand," said she, "and to my husband! London, I wonder who that's from? I never saw the seal before or the hand writing—there's some mystery there. I wonder whether it's from some mistress or improper person? I dare say it is—men are always deceiving one?"

" Oh, Jane!" cried Margaret, " that's impossible! You, of all people, cannot fear a rival --Robert could not serve you so!"

" Oh! the best of women, my dear, fare no better than the worst, with some men ; the best of men are worth very little ; and, as to Mr. Watson, he's no better than his neighbours. I can tell you I would not trust him without watching—and I'll *see* him open and read that letter, or my name is not Jane Watson ; but let's see—" turn-

ing again to her letters; "what else have we here? One for me—one for Elizabeth—who's that from? look Margaret?"

Margaret readily obeyed, and kneeling down besides her sister's chair, looked at the letter in question.

"I think," said she, "it's from the upholsterer who purchased some of our old furniture, that's H on the seal, and his name was Hill."

"Very likely, but look, Margaret, here's one for Emma—a lady's hand too—the London post-mark, and a coronet on the seal—good gracious, that must be from Miss Osborne, or perhaps from her brother—I wonder if one could see anything inside. You see Lord Osborne has franked it, and it's in an envelope, how tiresome: if it had only been folded like another letter we could have read some of it."

"So we might, I dare say Emma will never tell us a word, she's so close, she never chats comfortably with one about anything; I am sure to this day I know nothing at all about what she thinks of Lord Osborne, or any of his family—it's so provoking and disagreeable."

"So it is, I hate such nasty close dispositions; I, who am all openness and frankness, cannot comprehend anything secret

and underhand: well, we cannot help it, and I suppose we shall not know what it is about. Take those letters to the office, Margaret, and tell the clerk they were brought into the drawing-room by mistake."

Whilst Margaret fulfilled this commission, and stopped to flirt with the young clerk who received them, an old acquaintance of hers, Mrs. Watson, having first carefully laid aside the suspected epistle to her husband, proceeded upstairs with Emma's letter, and after turning it over in every direction, and even holding it up to the light at the stair-case window, but without benefit, she suddenly entered the nursery. There she found Janetta had dropped asleep on a bed, and Emma taking advantage of the leisure thus afforded, was preparing to write a letter.

"Janetta asleep, oh!" said the anxious mother, "well then you will have time, Emma, to do a little job for me, I want some alterations in the trimmings of my bombazine gown, and I wish you would do it for me before evening."

"I shall be happy," replied Emma, "to do anything in my power to oblige you, if you will only explain it to me."

"Very well, come with me, and I will

shew you what I want ; oh, by the bye, here's a letter for you, I think it must be from Miss Osborne from the seal—does she write to you often ?”

“ No,” replied Emma, surprised at hearing this, and holding out her hand for the letter which Mrs. Watson still detained to examine, “ I never heard from her before since she left the country !”

“ Indeed, what do you suppose she writes about—by the way, I suppose you are not accustomed to receive letters and give no account of them, are you ?”

“ Indeed I am,” replied Emma, quite ashamed at the idea of supervision in such a particular, “ I have never been controlled in either receiving or writing a letter.”

“ I consider that an exceedingly improper liberty for a young girl,” observed Mrs. Watson drily, “ at your time of life, under age, I should hold your guardian as very culpable if he took no account of your letters, and I am much mistaken if your brother does not expect, as a matter of course, to overlook all the correspondence you chose to carry on.”

“ Surely he cannot consider it necessary,” remonstrated Emma seriously, “ at my age—it is not as if I were a baby quite, but I am almost twenty.”

“Possibly so, but whilst you are under age you are his ward, and must have to submit to any restrictions he lays on you with a good grace. It’s no use colouring and pouting, there’s nothing like bearing things with a good temper, and not giving yourself airs and graces about it. There’s your letter!”

Emma took the letter, and observed, as she put it in her pocket:

“If you will show me what you want done, I shall be happy to oblige you.”

“Read your letter first, Emma, it may be a matter of business, and you should never delay business—your brother always says, ‘do what is to be done directly, and do it yourself.’”

Emma silently drew forth the letter, and breaking the seal read the following words:

“My dear Miss Watson,

“I am sorry to trouble you with any unpleasant subjects, but I cannot forbear mentioning a circumstance which nearly concerns your family; and when you know the particulars, you can judge for yourself. Mr. Tom Musgrove, whom I had, as you know, reason to suppose engaged to one of your sisters, is now in town,

and has not only been for some time past paying great attention to a young lady of fortune, a friend of my own, but, as I understand, has denied all engagement to Miss Watson, spoken very disparagingly of her, and even shewn letters written by her under the impression that such an engagement existed. Not knowing precisely how affairs stood between your sister and Mr. M., I dare not interfere, lest by revealing what she may perhaps wish concealed, I should injure her, and mortify you. I shall not, however, feel justified in preserving silence much longer, unless I am positively assured that all engagement is at an end between them. If she has released him from the promise to which we both are witnesses, it may be important to preserve silence on its previous existence, but if, as I cannot help suspecting, he has only released himself, has deceived or deserted her, I cannot allow my friend to be misled by him, and must insist on having his conduct cleared up and set in a proper light. I am sorry to be obliged to trouble you, as I feel convinced that whether secretly deceiving, or openly deserting your sister, he is certainly using her extremely ill: you know I never had a good opinion of his character. I am over-

whelmed with gaiety, and look back with a feeling of regret to the tranquil hours at Osborne Castle.

“Anxiously expecting your answer,

“I remain, dear Miss Watson,

“Your sincere friend,

“ROSA OSBORNE.”

“P.S. Mr. Musgrove’s address is, 75, Bond-street.—My brother and Sir William desire all sorts of proper messages to you; have you seen the Howards lately?”

Whilst Emma was reading these words, Jane was standing near her, playing with the sheet of paper in which it had been enveloped, and anxiously watching Emma’s countenance to see the effect produced by the communication. She saw enough to discover that the emotion occasioned by the contents was not of a pleasurable nature. It was something which required deliberation and consideration. Mrs. Watson grew impatient.

“Well, what is it?” cried she. “You

sit there pondering and pondering as if it were a dispatch from the king himself; tell me what your difficulty is, and I will help you!"

"I think," said Emma, hesitating and embarrassed, "I think I must speak to my brother about this, and, perhaps, I had better—I mean, he would like me to consult him *first*, before speaking even to you!"

"Tell me what it is," said Mrs. Watson, burning with curiosity, "let *me* know all about it, and I can tell you if it is necessary to consult him first!"

"But if I tell you now, I cannot apply first to him," remonstrated Emma, "and so that will not do."

"Oh, but you need not tell him that you told me," said Jane; "and as I am his wife, I should be sure to know it eventually."

"Can I not go to him at once?" said Emma, rising; "it would be much better, and as it must be done, the sooner I get over it the better."

"Is it anything you are afraid of telling him then?" enquired Mrs. Watson, still more eagerly, as she followed Emma from the room. "Is it about yourself? or Miss

Osborne? oh, I know—it is for Mr. Watson to draw the marriage settlements—they say she is going to be married to Sir William Gordon, is that true? or is it an offer from Lord Osborne, I wonder? how obstinate the child is; and how fast she runs, I must make haste, or I shall lose some of it.”

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. WATSON overtook Emma at the door of the private room, where so many important matters were settled by her husband, in time to hear an impatient "Come in," and to enter in her company. Robert was pacing up and down the room, and looked excessively surprised to see the intruders.

"What in the name of all that's troublesome brings you here to-day?" was his courteous salutation to his wife and sister.

"I wished to show you this letter, brother," said Emma, very humbly, with Miss Osborne's letter in her hand; "and

as it seemed to me, no time should be lost in acting on it, I have ventured to intrude—”

Robert did not allow her to finish her sentence, but took the paper from her hand, and read it deliberately and attentively through. Anything in the shape of business received his strictest attention, or he would never have occupied the position which he now held. When he came to the conclusion, he looked up, and observed,

“I don’t see that Jane has anything to do with this, and shall therefore beg she will leave the room—directly,” added he, seeing that his wife hesitated.

She knew the tone, and was obliged to withdraw ; but it was with a mental determination to plague her husband for a resolution so contrary to her wishes, though she could not settle whether the punishment should consist of boiling a leg of mutton, omitting his favorite pudding, or spoiling his chocolate.

Whilst she was arranging her plans for vengeance, her husband was holding council high on the subject of this letter.

How came Miss Osborne to know anything about it? what did she mean by saying that she and Emma were witnesses to

the engagement? was that really the case? why had Margaret never alluded to it?

Emma explained as briefly as possible when and how they two had overheard the whole conversation. Robert rubbed his hands with inexpressible glee.

"He's caught then, fairly caught—that is good—we shall soon bring him to terms now: capital, to think of your eavesdropping with so much effect; but why did you never mention this before, child, when you heard me lamenting the want of witnesses?"

Emma asserted that she was only waiting to consult Miss Osborne on the subject, for as they had been mutually pledged to secrecy, she could not divulge it without her agreeing to it. Robert was in an ecstasy of hope and enjoyment; he saw a brilliant perspective of litigation, an action for breach of promise of marriage to be conducted, with all the *éclat* that could be given to such a proceeding, and damages given to his sister which would enable her to marry decently out of hand. This was delightful. His first step he determined should be a letter from himself to the culprit, claiming his promise to Margaret, but without alluding to the witnesses to be produced, and he instructed Emma to write to Miss Osborne,

and tell her that her sister had never released Tom from his engagement, but was still acting on the belief that it existed, and that therefore she, Miss Osborne, was at liberty to inform her friend—indeed had better do so at once—that Mr. Musgrove was acting an equivocal part in paying attention to any other woman, as his hand was positively pledged to Miss Margaret Watson. This assurance from a party whom he naturally supposed unacquainted with the fact would alarm Tom, and it was possible, but Robert did not depend on it, that it might bring some offer of a compromise. Emma enquired what would be the result if, as was very probable, Mr. Musgrove should deny the engagement altogether, and trusting to there being no witnesses, refuse to fulfil it. Robert assured her that in that case he should have the means of compelling him either to fulfil the contract or pay large damages; he should not have a moment's hesitation in commencing an action against him, and with Miss Osborne and Emma to support Margaret's evidence there was no doubt of the result.

She was horrified to hear what was impending over her, and enquired, in a tone of something between fright and incredulity, whether he really contemplated forcing Miss

Osborne to appear in a public court of justice.

"Why should she not?" was his cool answer; "she is as capable of giving evidence, I presume, as any other woman, and her appearance will give a great publicity to the proceeding."

"But do you think she will like it?" suggested poor Emma, trembling for her own share of the trial as much as for her friend's.

"I shall not trouble my head about that—I will have her subpoenaed as a witness, and she must come, whether she likes it or not."

Emma was silent, but looked extremely uneasy. Her brother observed her distressed appearance, and after thinking a few minutes, addressed her.

"As you know so much of the Osbornes, Emma, and it really appears that you can keep a secret, which considering your age and sex is rather remarkable, I will tell you my whole plan, and we will see whether your wit can help me carry it out. Look here—suppose Tom Musgrove refuses all acknowledgment of the engagement, I threaten an action, call on you and Miss Osborne as witnesses; if it really comes before a jury she will be compelled to appear; but say she dislikes it—is too fine or too

delicate—well let her family use their influence with Musgrove to induce a marriage, and they may succeed. By threatening to make his perfidy public, by menacing him with the indignation of the family, if he compels us to resort to such extremities—possibly even by the judicious application of family interests to procure him some situation, some sinecure appointment, or in many similar ways, the Osbornes may work upon his feelings in a way which we could never do. Meantime say nothing; I will explain enough to Margaret, and you have only to answer all enquiries by the assurance that you are not allowed by me to mention the matter. Go now.”

Emma would gladly have retreated to her own room, but Jane was too sharp for her.

“What an immense time you have been,” cried she impatiently clutching hold of Emma’s shoulder; “I thought you would never come out; and I could not hear a word you said. Now tell me all about it.”

Emma assured her that she dared not—her brother had so strictly forbidden all allusion to the subject; she really was not at liberty to mention a single word.

“Well really that’s great impertinence of Mr. Watson—I’ll give it him well for that:

what can it signify whether I know it or not—I dare say a mighty matter to make so much fuss about—any affair you are concerned in must be so very important: no, don't go upstairs, I want you in the parlour, child."

Emma reluctantly returned to the parlour. Elizabeth and Margaret were both there; but before Jane had time to expatiate upon the injustice and tyranny of her husband in denying her knowledge which did not concern her, a morning visitor was announced.

The lady who entered was a Mrs. Turner, a widow, with an unfashionable black dress, a good-humoured but unmeaning face, and a cheerful manner.

"Well, Mrs. Watson," cried she, "here you are, amiable and industrious as ever; I am sure your husband must thank his lucky stars which gave him such a wife—I always consider you quite as the pattern for all housekeepers and married ladies. And such a cheerful party as I find—who are these sweet girls?—charming creatures I have no doubt."

"Mr. Watson's sisters," said Jane laconically.

"Ah I remember—poor things, orphans—Miss Margaret I beg your pardon, I ought to have known you—I believe it was the

black gown deceived me—elegant—black always looks well—and Miss Margaret's slender figure sets it off to advantage. What a sweet pretty face," (eyeing Emma) "really you must be quite proud of your new sisters, Mrs. Watson. Now I don't know anything pleasanter than a pretty face—it's so cheerful—all three so remarkably good-looking too—they are not the least like you, Mrs. Watson."

Mrs. Watson made no other answer than an enquiry for Mrs. Turner's son-in-law—Mr. Millar.

"George, oh, he's charming, thank you," replied the merry lady, who seemed to view everything *couleur de rose*, "up to his elbows in hops and malt—I often tell him, it's well if he be never smothered with his business. I do believe it's the most flourishing one in the town. Those little darlings, his children—you cannot think what angels they are; but they do want a mother sadly; now, Mrs. Watson—you could not recommend one, could you?" looking slyly at the three young ladies; "any nice, steady, sensible young woman of six or seven and twenty—George need not look out for a fortune, thank Heaven—he's a plenty, and to spare, of his own—

but a nice, good-humoured wife, who would not thwart him, or vex his children—that's what he wants."

"Well," cried Mrs. Watson, with delight, "let him come here; I dare say either of the girls would not say him nay—they have no money, so they must take what they can get. It does not do for such to be too nice; not but what even the nicest might well be satisfied with George Millar."

"Aye, indeed, well they might. Do you know I am at him, day and night, to marry again; and he always says I must chose him a wife, for he has not time to see for himself. Now I'll make him come here to-night, and see what he'll say."

"Do so pray," said Jane, "we are expecting a few friends to dinner and tea; let him come in the evening when his business is over; but don't say a word of our plans, let him be taken by surprise, you know."

"Well," exclaimed Elizabeth, "I like your plan amazingly, and I give you fair warning, Mrs. Turner, that I shall do my utmost to please your son-in-law, and take the situation of Mrs. Millar. I am convinced he is a most delightful man, and well worth looking after."

"Well done my dear," cried Mrs Turner, "I like honesty and candour of all things, and am delighted to find you are not too proud to own that you, like all other girls, want to be married. Some pretend to deny it; but it makes no difference, I know what they think secretly, and see through them all the same."

"We will not try to trifle with such penetration," said Elizabeth, laughing—"ask my sisters if they agree to your assertion."

"Oh, I know Miss Margaret does," cried Mrs. Turner; "she is longing to be married at this moment—and I could point out the gentleman too—my George has no chance with her."

Margaret giggled, and twisted about.

"Only think of my affairs becoming so public, as my wishes to be known like that. You are a dangerous person, I know of old, Mrs. Turner!"

"Well, I must be going—I have to call on the Greenes this morning—sweet girls, the Greenes, arn't they—amazingly clever—very plain though—well, well, one can't have everything; do you know, I plague George about being in love with Ann Greene, and he cannot bear the sight of her in consequence—it is such fun."

"I know very little of the Greenes," observed Mrs. Watson, grandly, "they are not in our set. I dare say soap-boiling is a very good trade; but I have a fancy it must soil the fingers. Mr. Millar will not meet the Greenes here at all."

Mrs. Turner did not stay to defend the Greenes from the aspersions cast on them by the amiable Mrs. Watson, but hurried away to praise them to themselves, certain that in this case her eulogy would be well received.

Hardly had she left the room, when Robert entered, with an open letter in his hand, and enquired of Emma, if she had written as he desired her to do. Emma acknowledged that she had not.

"Then do it directly," said he, "and learn never to delay letters of business—always do what you have to do at once—it is idle, and worse to put it off."

Emma did not attempt to offer any excuse, but was preparing to leave the room to obey, when Jane stopped her, and recommended her remaining where she was to write; there were plenty of paper, pens, and ink in the room, and there could not be the smallest occasion for leaving the parlour.

She could not very well avoid yielding

to this request, which, however, she suspected strongly was only made in hopes of obtaining some information relative to the letter in question. Meanwhile, Robert, going up to Margaret, showed her the letter he held in his hand, and desired her to read it.

"Oh, how very good of you," cried Margaret, when she had run through the contents, "how kind of you to take it up so warmly ; you who never believed that what I said was true ; how glad I am that you have come round at last to believe my assertions ; now, I trust, Tom will relent, and my blighted affections will once more revive and flourish !"

"Don't talk to me of blighted affections," replied her brother, impatiently ; "don't bother me with such nonsense ; do learn, if you can, to think of matters of business *as* business ; and in an affair of this kind, try to speak in a rational, sensible way. Do you think Musgrove will yield to this representation ?"

"Oh, no doubt of it," said Margaret, "at least, I dare say he will ; but suppose he should not, what will you do then ?"

"It appears," replied Robert, "that both Emma and Miss Osborne heard what passed between you, and as, in that case, they can

both appear as witnesses for you, I have no doubt of getting a verdict in your favour, and very considerable damages from any jury in the county."

Margaret sat staring at her brother in amazement, and then repeated,

"Miss Osborne and Emma, are you sure," and turning to Emma, she exclaimed, "Where were you then, I should like to know."

"We were concealed from your sight," replied her sister, "by some orange trees, and thus we heard all you said without intending it."

"Listening were you—very pretty indeed—honorable conduct—from you too, who make such a fuss about propriety and honesty, and all that; but, after all, you are no better than your neighbours, it seems," said she, spitefully.

"I am sure I am very sorry," said Emma, with tears in her eyes, "if I have done anything to vex you; but indeed, though it may seem strange, I really could not help it."

"Oh no, of course not!" pursued Margaret, tossing her head back; "people never can help doing any thing which happens to suit their fancy—however, before I venture to talk another time, I will

take care and ascertain if you are in the room or not—such meanness listening!”

“It appears very strange to me,” cried Mrs. Watson, anxious to understand it all; “that we should suddenly hear that Emma knew all about it, when Margaret was so long wishing to have some evidence to prove her words; why did not Emma say so sooner, then?”

“And it seems still more extraordinary to me,” interposed Elizabeth, “that Margaret should be so angry when she thus, unexpectedly, finds what she wishes for. Emma told me of this long ago, and told me that Miss Osborne had induced her to be silent on the subject for several reasons; but I know, from what she told me then, it was quite accidental, and could not be avoided, their overhearing Tom’s conversation with you, Margaret.”

“And it appears strangest of all to me,” observed Robert, contemptuously, “that women never can keep to the point on any subject, but must start off on twenty different branches, which have nothing to do with the end in view. What does it signify to you, Margaret, when, how, or why your conversation was overheard—when, on the fact of its being so, depends your chance

of getting two or three thousand pounds in your pocket? What does it matter as to Emma's motive for listening, so long as she did listen to such good purpose?"

Margaret pouted and replied only by some indistinct murmurs.

Her brother then went on to explain to her the circumstance of Miss Osborne's interposition—shewing her, greatly to Emma's annoyance, the letter that morning received from London, and informing her of what he had desired might be written in answer. Margaret's feelings on the occasion, formed a most comic mixture of pleasure and indignation.

She was excessively gratified at being talked about, and made the subject of letters to and from Miss Osborne; and the notion of being plaintiff in an action at law, seemed to have almost as great a charm for her imagination, as being married; but then, she was sorely mortified at the information that Tom Musgrove's infidelity was so open and evident; she was vexed, bitterly vexed, at the idea of a rival; and she could hardly console herself for such an indignity, by the expectation of the damages which were to be awarded her. She looked very foolish and very spiteful when her sister-in-law made some ill-natured ob-

servations about overrating the powers of her own charms; and still more so when Robert added:

“That he had no doubt the fellow was drunk when he made the offer, but it did not matter if he was.”

Emma was very glad when she had finished her letter, and was able to escape from the subject by quitting the house for a walk with Elizabeth. Jane had some errands for them in the town; but, as soon as they were fulfilled, they were able to turn their steps towards the country, and escaping into green fields and pleasant lanes, refresh their eyes and their tempers by watching for the first appearance of the spring flowers. Such a stroll was a real treat to Emma, and gave her strength to endure the numberless petty annoyances which Mrs. Watson heaped on her. She felt, whilst she could still enjoy a few hours of quiet converse with her sister—still breathe the fresh air of Heaven, and seek the simple, but unalloyed, satisfaction, to be derived from contemplating the works of Providence, that she had still blessings to be thankful for; that her situation, with all its drawbacks, ought still to call forth feelings of gratitude, when compared with the misfortunes of others of her fellow beings; and

that it became her to be ready to acknowledge this, lest she should be taught to prize the comforts she still enjoyed by their withdrawal.

With these sentiments in her heart, she strove to act upon them; and when Elizabeth would have turned the conversation, to past times, and reverted to Mr. Howard and his sister, she had the strength of mind to turn away from the dangerous pleasure, and pursue some other topic.

They stayed out rather late—that is to say, they were not in the house till rather more than half past four, and they were to dine at five. They met their sister-in-law on the stairs in a great bustle.

“Oh dear! I have been in such a worry for you, Emma,” cried she, “how very tiresome that you should be so late; I want Janetta dressed and her hair curled, and Betsy has not time to attend to it, because she has to dress my head—and here have I been waiting and waiting whilst you have been wandering over the country amusing yourselves without the least regard to me or my comfort.”

“I am sorry to have put you to any inconvenience, but I had not the least idea you wanted me,” replied Emma, “what can I do for you now?”

The wrath of any one but Mrs. Watson, must have been disarmed and pacified by Emma's good-tempered answer, and the sweetness of her manner, but Jane's was a disposition which yielded only if violently opposed, but became every hour more encroaching when given way to. To Elizabeth, who boldly spoke her mind on all occasions, she was far more submissive—but over Emma she could tyrannise without fear of a rude or thoughtless retort, a rebellious action, or even a discontented look; consequently, Emma was now dispatched to the nursery to perform the office of maid to her little niece, whilst the woman, whose business it was to attend to this matter, was occupied in arranging her mistress's toilette.

At length, Mrs. Watson was ready, and sweeping into the nursery with as much finery as her mourning would allow her to display, she took away her little girl, and allowed Emma time to arrange her own dress for dinner.

On descending to the drawing-room she found her sister-in-law engaged in talking and listening eagerly to the important gentleman from the country, for whose sake the dinner party had been arranged.

He was a broad-faced, portly man, who filled up the arm-chair in which he was

seated, with perfect accuracy of adjustment, and whose countenance seemed to Emma to express a sort of hungry tolerance of Mrs. Watson's attentions. Whenever the door opened, and admitted with each fresh arrival a strong scent of dinner from the kitchen, he seemed to imbibe the odour with peculiar satisfaction, and after inhaling sundry times the teeming atmosphere, heaved a sigh indicative of anticipation and comfortable assurance for the future.

The fluttering of Mrs. Watson's trimmings, the waving of her ringlets, and the affected little bursts of merriment in which she indulged for his amusement, hardly discomposed him at all, so intent was he on the forthcoming dinner. Robert Watson was standing over the fire talking to a gloomy, dark-browed young man, a stranger to Emma, who seemed to consider that in conferring the favor of his bodily presence on the Watsons, he was doing them so great an honor, that there was no occasion for him to trouble himself with any further efforts, and that the absence of mind in which he ostentatiously indulged, was due to his own dignity, impaired, or at least endangered by the situation in which he had suffered himself to be placed. There was also a thin, white-faced individual, something be-

tween a man and a boy, who was chattering to Margaret with all the ease and volubility of an old acquaintance. Emma remembered that she had heard Jane and Margaret speaking of a Mr. Alfred Freemantle, whose family were "quite genteel country people," as being artickled to Mr. Watson, and concluded that the individual thus mentioned was before her. Just as she had settled this point in her own mind, and seated herself near Elizabeth, she perceived the young man make a prodigious theatrical start, and heard him exclaim in a tone which could not be called low:

"For heaven's sake who is that exquisitely beautiful creature?"

"It's only Emma—my sister Emma," said Margaret evidently vexed, "do you think her so very pretty? well I don't think I should call her so."

"She blushes divinely," cried he, fixing his eyes on her, "what a glorious complexion—and her name is Emma—sweet Emma."

Emma was half amused, but almost angry at his impertinence; had he been a little older, her anger would have been more decided, but he seemed such a mere boy, that she attributed his offensive behaviour to youthful ignorance; a charitable

construction for which he would certainly not have thanked her.

Having stared at her for some minutes with unwavering perseverance, he rose, and crossing the room, let himself drop into a chair close by her, with a weight and impetus quite astonishing to Emma, when she considered the slight figure which produced such a concussion.

The next moment he opened a conversation with her by saying:

"I have just experienced a most delicious sensation, Miss Emma Watson, the sight of you has exactly recalled the image of a cousin of mine, from whom unfortunate circumstances have so imperatively separated me. Poor girl—you have no idea how lovely she was."

"Indeed," was Emma's reply, quite willing to admit the truth of this assertion, and equally ready to let the subject rest; but he had no intention of the sort.

"It is charming to be reminded of an absent friend, delightful—exquisite—are you likely to make a long stay at Croydon, Miss Emma Watson?"

"It is uncertain," replied Emma.

"And you are actually living in the same house in which I spend the greater part of

my weary days, and nothing but these envious walls conceals you from my sight. Is not that hard?"

"Really no," replied Emma, unable to control a smile at the absurdity of his manner, "I cannot say I think so at all."

"You don't—what a monstrous bore Mrs. Watson is—I am sure you will agree to that."

"She is my sister-in-law," said Emma.

"Yes, I know, but that's the very reason you should hate her—I detest mine."

"And you consider that an infallible rule, of course, since you suggest it to me."

"I am certain," said the young man, "that our sympathies are strong: there is something in the turn of your head, the sparkle of your eye, the formation of your upper lip, that betokens decided participation in the feelings which corruscate, burn, and almost consume your humble servant."

"What a fine day it has been," observed Emma, purposely choosing the most common-place subject in reply to his rhapsody.

He looked astonished and perplexed, then said slowly:

"I fear after all we are not kindred souls—do you love music?"

"Pretty well," replied Emma, determined to keep down to the most common-place level in her conversation.

He cast up his eyes, and turned away for a moment, throwing himself back in his chair, and elevating his chin in the air, whilst he carefully combed his hair with his fingers. Presently, however, he returned again to the attack.

"I suspect you are funny."

"I beg your pardon," said Emma, looking perplexed in her turn.

"I say I suspect you are laughing at me all this time."

"Oh," said she.

At this moment dinner was announced, and whilst the fat gentlemam was slowly emerging from his chair to accompany Mrs. Watson to the dining parlour, Emma's new acquaintance was pouring out a voluble strain of nonsense in her ear.

"To think of reasonable and reasoning creatures lowering themselves to an equality with the beasts of the field, by indulging in what is falsely called the pleasures of the table—to think of their voluntarily assembling only to eat; degrading their intellects by sitting down to spend two hours over roast mutton or apple pie—really it is inconceivable—allow me to conduct you, and

your fair sister Margaret to the dinner-table. Sweetest Miss Margaret," presenting her his hand as he spoke, "my felicity is beyond expression—I can only equal my situation between you two, to love amongst the roses."

At the dinner-table Mrs. Watson appeared in all her glory. The dinner was really good, and as the favoured guest inhaled the odour of the soup, it was evident from the complacent expression which stole over his features, that he was well satisfied with the prospect now before him. Mrs. Watson's tactics were suited to the occasion; she devoted her attention to helping him to the best things on the table—the most dainty morsel, the epicure's piece, was in every case heaped on his plate. It would have been amusing to an observer to watch the struggle which in some cases occurred between Robert's self-interest and self-love. His appetite was at variance with his policy; it was difficult for him to yield the precedence at his own table to the love of good eating exhibited by another. To see his wife thus liberally disposed to another man was a severe blow, and whilst he acknowledged the justice, prudence and propriety of thus acting, it went to his heart to behold it. Her attentions, her flattery, her winning

smiles she was welcome to indulge him with, but the dainty morsel from the cod's head—the largest share from the sweet-bread fricassee, the liver-wing of the spring chicken, these he could not resign without a sigh.

Mr. Alfred Freemantle, however, did not leave Emma much leisure to make remarks; he had seated himself by her side at table, and was paying her an infinite number of what he considered delicate attentions; calling incessantly to the footman to bring her vegetables—urging her to try every dish on the table, helping her to salt, and filling her glass with wine to the very brim, as he asserted all ladies liked bumpers; at the same time pouring into her ears the most common-place nonsense about his devotion to the fair sex, his zeal in performing his *devoirs*, and sundry other observations of the sort.

Emma gave him no encouragement, but he did not require any; perfectly satisfied with his own charms, and accustomed to consider himself as superior to his ordinary companions, he was well convinced that her shyness, not her dissatisfaction, kept her silent, and never for a moment supposed she could be otherwise than charmed with his conversation and company.

The dinner appeared to her, consequently, very dull, but at last the moment of release came; her sister-in-law gave the signal for departure, and the four ladies returned to the drawing-room. Here they were no sooner assembled than Margaret commenced a violent attack on Emma for her scandalous flirtation with Mr. Freemantle. He used to be a particular admirer of Margaret's, and she could not with patience resign his admiration to another. In fact she had not strength of mind to see with composure any woman engross the attention of a man with whom she was acquainted, all whose words and looks of admiration she wished to appropriate to herself; for having been for a couple of winters the reigning belle of her small neighbourhood, she still fancied her charms supreme, and was quite insensible of the fact, obvious to every one else, that she was now only exhibiting the remains of former beauty. Her bloom had been of short duration; she was too fretful to preserve the plumpness necessary to show her complexion to advantage, and she early lost the glow and the fairness which had formed her greatest charm.

Alfred Freemantle was not now to be won by all her wiles; Emma's newer face, and the sort of wondering indifference with

which she heard his compliments, and his ready-prepared jokes formed an irresistible charm to him; he declared her freshness was *piquant*, her innocence was exquisite, that it was delicious to meet with a pretty girl so perfectly unhacknied in the ways of the world; little suspecting that the simple manner which he took for ignorance of life resulted entirely from her just appreciation of his little talent, and the total want of interest excited by such flattery as he was capable of administering.

But she could make no impression on Margaret by declarations of indifference, or assertions that she had thought him decidedly disagreeable. Her sister considered such words as a mere subterfuge, and would not believe that Mr. Alfred Freemantle was a sort of person to slight one girl for another, a stranger, without some special encouragement to do so.

Jane took up Margaret's cause, as she was always delighted to have an opportunity of finding fault with Emma, of whom she felt a decided jealousy, and along and serious lecture was the consequence, which was only interrupted by the arrival of some of the evening visitors. The reproaches which were showered on Emma were, it is true, parried in some degree by Elizabeth, who

although greatly respecting her sister-in-law, did not feel so much afraid of her as to refrain on that account from expressing her opinion. She vigorously defended Emma to the best of her abilities, and there was no saying how long the dispute might have been carried on but for the arrival of Mr. George Millar and a young lady, his half sister, who accompanied him.

Emma was obliged, as well as she could, to conceal the tears which were swimming in her eyes and anxious to avoid any further animadversions, she seated herself as far as possible from the gentleman, and occupied herself with some work which she had undertaken for Mrs. Watson.

She could not, however, restrain her attention which was speedily engaged by the young lady, whom she now saw for the first time. Annie Millar was not regularly pretty, but there was an expression of liveliness and spirit in her face, which would have won the palm from twenty professed beauties. Her manners suited her face exactly; lively, arch, and yet perfectly unaffected, she did not seem to know what constraint and fear were. She said whatever came into her head; but that head was so overflowing with good-humour and kind-

ness that there was no room for malice or ill-will to abide there.

"Well, Mrs. Watson," cried she, "as I found you had invited my brother for this evening, I have invited myself; I cannot imagine why you left *me* out; but feeling certain you would be delighted to see me, I slipped on my second best gown, and came. Now I expect you to make me a civil speech in reply."

She was very certain of having a civil speech made. Mr. George Millar was a man of too much consequence amongst his own set, for his sister to be slighted in any degree. His fortune was large, and his disposition liberal; he was a widower, and he was very fond of his sister; Annie, therefore, was certain of compliments and welcomes, and was precisely the person to be received by Mrs. Watson with extreme rapture.

"I did so want to be acquainted with your other sisters," added Miss Millar, "that I think I should have ventured here had I been even certain you would scold instead of caressing me; I always envy every one who is blessed with a sister, and think it must be the most delightful relationship in the world."

"And I dare say your brother agrees

with you," said Mrs. Watson, smiling graciously.

"Do you, George?" cried the young lady; "no, no, he considers me, without exception, the most troublesome of all his *enoumbrances*; a charge which he is always trying to get rid of, by inducing some one else to undertake it. There is no telling you the pains he is at to throw the burden on some other unhappy man."

Her brother shook his head at his young sister, who only smiled in reply, and continued—

"Hitherto I have defeated his arts, and preserved myself from the snare; how long such good luck may continue to attend me I cannot tell."

"Well, Miss Millar, there's a good opportunity to-night," said Mrs. Watson, "for we have, amongst our visitors, a young and single man, who, I believe, is quite ready for any one who takes the trouble of catching him; so if you think him worth the trouble—"

"He must be very different from any man I ever saw yet," interrupted Annie. "Do you mean your charming young clerk, Mr. Alfred Frivolous, as I call him."

"Oh, dear, no," cried Mrs. Watson; "a very different person—he is very well off

—has large property in Suffolk—quite a grand estate there—with no near connections—no sisters to be in your way—a most beautiful house—respectable family—I believe quite one of the first families in the county—and bears a high character.”

“And may I ask the name of this desirable individual?” enquired Miss Millar, assuming an appearance of intense interest.

“Grant, Mr. Henry Grant—I am sure you will be charmed with him.”

“Describe him—I am rather particular as to appearance.”

“Why, I cannot say that he is absolutely handsome, but very dark—dark and genteel—quite genteel, I assure you.”

“Lively?” enquired Annie.

“Perhaps he may be—but I do not know that I have heard him speak.”

“Charming!” cried Annie; “dine with you, and yet not address you—his must be the very refinement of good manners—the very cream of gentility indeed—tell me some more about this delightful personage. Does he like ladies?”

“I cannot say—but though he seems rather shy of them now, depend upon it, he is all the easier caught.”

"Ay, by those who try; I can fancy that certainly—I really must exert myself—your fascinating description quite rouses my energies."

"And I am sure if you do set about it, your success is certain," continued Mrs. Watson.

"Thank you, my dear Madam, for your encouraging opinion. I fear you rate my powers too highly," laughed Annie, bowing with mock ceremony—"a young and inexperienced girl like me, cannot pretend to anything so wonderful as the captivation of a dark Mr. Grant, with a large estate, and a contempt for women—you must not expect such a triumph for me."

"Indeed, I am certain you will succeed to admiration," cried Mrs. Watson, eagerly.

"Show me how to begin then," pursued Annie. "Teach me the first step."

"I should recommend your catching his eye in some striking attitude—as I dare say he is fond of paintings—something very elegant to attract him at once," replied the married lady quite sincerely.

"Indeed—let me practice," cried Miss Millar, placing herself in an affected attitude in an arm-chair. "Will this do—or this—do I look sufficiently captivating

now? which becomes me most, languor or liveliness."

"You, I see, are determined to make game of the whole thing," said Mrs. Watson. "Will nothing induce you to think well of a single man? are you so devoted a follower of celibacy yourself? ah, you are quite right—liberty, charming liberty! no one knows its value till, like me, they have sacrificed it. Ah, I say you are quite right—only, as you are so uncommonly fascinating, I cannot wonder if others should seek to win you."

"You are far too complimentary, Mrs. Watson," said the young lady, with affected gravity, and rising from her chair, she walked up to Emma, and commenced an acquaintance with her by admiring her work.

Emma was almost afraid to speak to her, lest the doing so should excite her sister-in-law's wrath again; but Annie Millar had taken a fancy to her face, and was not to be repulsed. Her lively chat soon drew off her companion's thoughts from the disagreeable circumstances which had previously occurred, and half an hour passed pleasantly. Meantime Mrs. Watson, with judicious precaution, had set Elizabeth down to back-gammon with George Millar, and guessing from the lively conversation

carried on amidst the quick rattle of the dice, that all was going right there, she left them to improve their acquaintance in peace.

Very soon after this, the gentlemen strolled into the room—Mr. Grant first, as if anxious to make the more impression by his appearance. He looked round the room—and, as if satisfied by this survey that there was no one sufficiently attractive to induce him to engage in the labour of conversation, he walked away and took refuge in a small inner apartment, which opened from the drawing-room, and which was lighted by a single lamp.

Miss Millar shrugged her shoulders slightly and gave Emma an expressive look, but had no time for words, as they were at that moment joined by Margaret and Mr. Freemantle.

The latter made Annie a flourishing bow whilst exclaiming:

“Miss Miliar, by all that is fair and felicitous, this is an unexpected pleasure.”

She did not seem to find it so; but looked cold and careless, whilst she made him as slight a return for his salutation as possible.

"Would that I possessed an artist's pencil to pourtray the group before me," continued the young man, with affected rapture. "The graces exactly—it does, indeed, deserve to be commemorated on canvas or in marble. At all events, it is for ever impressed on the tablet of my heart."

Margaret giggled—Emma looked immoveably grave, whilst Annie smiled scornfully and said:

"What is that, Mr. Freemantle? Pray repeat that last sentence again, that I may commit it to memory."

It certainly is a thing very repulsive to human nature to repeat a sentence twice over—especially if it is a flourishing speech which only answers when thrown off hand at once.

Annie was perfectly aware that she could not have found a more effectual way of tormenting Mr. Freemantle; he looked very silly, and replied in a qualifying tone,

"I only said—I only meant, that I should never forget it!"

"Oh!" replied the young lady, "was *that* all? I am sorry I gave you the trouble of repeating it."

"Miss Millar is too much accustomed to homage," continued he, "for my feeble

attempts to create any sensation in her mind. She despises such a humble worshipper as her poor devoted servant."

"I beg your pardon," returned she, "but I never despise any thing *humble*—quite the contrary; and your overwhelming complimentary speeches really raise such a variety of sensations, by which, I suppose, you mean sentiments, in my mind that I positively know not which way to look."

He really thought she meant to flatter him, and smiled in a way that showed all his white teeth: yet, in conversing with Annie Millar, he always had a lurking suspicion that she was laughing at him, and therefore, never felt quite at his ease with her.

"Do sing to us," said he presently, in an insinuating tone; "it is such ecstasy to hear you sing! Pray indulge us with the 'Flowers of the Forest,' or one of your other charming Scotch melodies."

Annie compressed her lips and only bowed her head slightly in reply; then turning to Emma, addressed her on the subject of music. Several other people joined the party, and the tray with tea, pound cake and muffin, made its progress round the room. Mr. Freemantle insisted on helping each lady "to the refreshing beverage," as he

called it himself, and passed many small and rather pointless jokes on the subject of the quantity of sugar they each required. "Sweets to the sweet," was a favorite quotation of his, and one which he usually found well received.

"Look at that man," whispered Annie, pointing to Mr. Grant, apparently fast asleep on the sofa; "should you not like to throw a cloak over his head, that his slumbers may be undisturbed. Oh! I'll tell you what I will do—look now!"

And stealing quietly into the inner room, she softly, but effectually, extinguished the lamp; and then returning closed the door, and placing a chair against it, seated herself there, leaving Mr. Grant in complete darkness "to finish his nap," as she said, "without risk of being roused by intrusive visitors." Mrs. Watson did not see this manœuvre, but Margaret and Emma laughed quietly—whilst Alfred, overcome by excessive amusement, dropped on a sofa, and rolled about in ecstasy.

George Millar, whose table was near, looked round.

"What naughty trick are you about now, Annie?" said he suspiciously.

"I!" cried the young lady, with well af-

fectured surprise; "who so quiet and well-behaved in this room as myself! Your suspicions are derogatory to me, and disgraceful to yourself, George."

And she drew herself up in an attitude of offended dignity, crossing her hands in her lap, and looking straight before her.

George went on with his game; and Mr. Alfred Freemantle, having recovered his composure, resumed his station by Miss Millar's side. He enquired how long she intended to keep the poor man in the dark? Miss Millar said he was in the black hole, and should continue there till he asked to get out; for, indeed, his voice had never yet been heard, and she was anxious to settle the question whether he was or was not, dumb.

Presently afterwards another of the party came up, and begged in the name of Mrs. Watson that Miss Millar would favor them with a song.

Annie possessed the rare talent of singing without accompaniment; and without affectation, when requested by the mistress of the house, she immediately complied, and warbled some beautiful old ballads to the great delight of the company.

She did not change her position, but sat with her back to the door, when, in the

midst of her second song, a loud crash was heard in the little room where Mr. Grant was confined; this was followed by vociferous and angry exclamations—at which every one started forward with various intonations of surprise, wondering what was the matter. Miss Millar did not cease singing or move her seat, but merely waved her hand to keep back those who pressed on her, and finished her song with perfect self-possession.

When, however, a second part was suddenly taken to her performance by a strange voice in the next room, every one was still more astonished, and insisted on opening the door to discover the minstrel. When this was done, they saw Mr. Grant leaning quietly against one chair, whilst another overthrown beside him revealed the origin of the noise which had at first arrested them; he was in the dark, of course, and seemed as he stood there so sleepy and dull, that they could hardly imagine he was likewise the author of the melodious sounds they had overheard. How he came there, why he was in the dark, and why he remained so, were questions rapidly asked by such as knew him well enough to speak to him—but he could give no explanation—he only knew that he had woke up and found himself on the sofa in the dark, and thought he was in

bed, until rolling off convinced him that he was not; that he had fallen on the floor and made a noise he supposed, and that he should be particularly glad to know whether Mrs. Watson was in the constant habit of locking up her guests in the dark.

Mrs. Watson came forward full of apologies and regrets; she really could not imagine how it had happened, or who had shut the door—it must have been so purely accidental; she was excessively shocked, and particularly grieved, and she hoped it would never occur again.

Nothing could be more admirable than the air of perfect innocence and ignorance which Annie Millar assumed through the whole scene; to have seen her face no one would have imagined that she was in the smallest degree inculpated in the false imprisonment which so afflicted poor Mr. Grant, and his slumber had been far too real and unfeigned for him to have any idea of the offender. Alfred Freemantle indeed drew all the suspicions on himself by his immoderate laughter and the facetious observations which he made at the discovery. Soon after this card-tables were formed, and the whole party sat down to different games, which occupied the rest of the evening.

Emma felt on parting that she should like to know more of Annie Millar, and she

found the next morning that her wish was likely to be gratified, for the young lady called in the course of the forenoon, and expressed the strongest desire to carry on an acquaintance with both the sisters. Margaret, whom she had known previously, and for whom she certainly entertained no very strong predilection, did not seem inclined to join the party which Annie tried to arrange for a walk.

The feelings of jealousy and dislike which any pretty girl awakened in Margaret's mind were peculiarly vivid towards Annie Millar, and she naturally shrank from bringing herself much in contact with her.

Mrs. Watson came into the room just as Miss Millar was pressing the two other sisters to join her. As soon as she understood how the case stood, being at that time peculiarly cross with Emma on account of the admiration she had excited on the previous night, she interposed in this way :

"Indeed, my dear Miss Millar, it is most kind of you to propose such a thing, and I have no doubt but that the girls feel excessively obliged to you, but it is impossible for Emma to accept it. Loth as I am to refuse any request of yours, I cannot really accede to this one. Her duty must confine her within doors this morning, she has calls upon her time which must not be set aside;

and she must therefore forego the gratification you propose."

Emma could not help feeling rather astonished at hearing such a declaration, as she was quite unaware of any particular duties which would compel her to remain in the house that morning, and she was quite puzzled what to answer, when Annie Millar said coaxingly,

"Why can you not put off your business till the afternoon, and go with us now? What have you so very particular to do?"

"I suppose my sister-in-law wants me," said she colouring and hesitating; "and of course, if so, it is necessary I should stay."

"Oh, I thought it might be some penance you were to perform—something quite wonderful and romantic—but really I think you might contrive to delay it, and accompany us to-day."

"You are uncommonly kind," again interrupted Mrs. Watson, "but there is so much of regularity and system absolutely necessary where very young people are concerned, that whilst Emma continues under my care I cannot allow her to be running out at all hours—though if any one could tempt me to relax in my rules it would be you I assure you."

The idea of a young woman of Emma's age not being at liberty to walk or sit still according to her own fancy, appeared to Annie Millar very extraordinary, and her wonder and annoyance were equally shared by Emma herself, now hearing for the first time of rules that had never to her knowledge existed at all; and feeling unable to contend against the assumption of authority which her sister-in-law exercised over her proceedings, without the risk of causing an actual quarrel with her on the subject, she began to look forward with considerable dread, and to wonder what would come next.

"Well," said Miss Millar, "if it is not convenient for Miss Emma to walk now, will you tell me when and at what hour I may look forward to that pleasure? Exceedingly as I regret that your rules have disappointed me to-day, there is this comfort, that they ensure my gratification at some other time, when I understand your arrangements. At what time *does* your sister take exercise?"

Mrs. Watson was completely caught, and excessively puzzled what to say. She hesitated for a moment, and then observed,

"Well, as I do not like to thwart any plan of yours, I will try another day and

make arrangements to gratify you, my dear Miss Millar; in the meantime I recommend you to take your walk to-day without any reference to Emma."

Miss Millar assented with a sigh, and she and Elizabeth set off together.

CHAPTER IX.

"A very prettty thing indeed," exclaimed Mrs. Watson the moment the door closed on them, "a very pretty and reasonable thing for a girl like you, Miss Emma, coming into this house as a dependent, without a farthing in your pocket, or an expectation of any kind, a very pretty thing I say for you to go flaunting and jaunting about with all the best company in the town; I can tell you if this is the way you go on, I shall take care and keep you up stairs when I have visitors. I suppose you hope for an opportunity for carrying on your acquaintance with Alfred Freemantle, or perhaps you are looking out for George

Millar himself. I see I must keep a firm hand over you, or I shall have some disgraceful proceedings no doubt—a girl of your age to be so given up to flirtation; it is quite shocking.”

“I do not know what I have done,” replied Emma, struggling with her feelings, “to deserve your reproaches; Miss Millar asked me to walk with her, but how am I to blame for that?”

“Don’t answer me, Miss, it is exceedingly impertinent and disrespectful, and I will not put up with it from you. If you imagine because you have been acquainted with the Osbornes and those grand folks, that you are to be mistress here, and do as you like, you will find yourself excessively mistaken. I shall allow nothing of the kind I assure you. Go to the nursery and take care of the little girl, and tell the nurse-maid I want her to go on an errand for me. Try and make yourself useful if you can, and show some gratitude for the extraordinary liberality of your brother, in receiving a beggar like you into his house.”

“Emma’s spirit rose and tempted her strongly to rebel; her first impulse was to go to her own room, and shut herself in there; but she remembered that she was

powerless, and totally without effectual support in the house. Elizabeth, it was true, would take her part, but she could only talk, not act, and as any contention must be fruitless, ending inevitably in her own defeat, she wisely determined to submit as quietly as possible, endeavouring to suppress her unavoidable feelings of repugnance and mortification, and trying to remember that since she was actually indebted to her brother for food and shelter, it became her to try by every means in her power to lessen the unwelcome burden. She went accordingly as she was desired to the nursery, and remained the rest of the morning in charge of Janetta, whose encreasing attachment towards her kind, new aunt, really gave her satisfaction, and made the time pass as pleasantly as was possible under such circumstances.

It distressed Elizabeth a good deal that Emma was not allowed to walk with her, and as she could never disguise her feelings, she immediately expressed this to her companion, adding that she was afraid Emma could never be happy at Robert's house, as Jane seemed to have taken a decided dislike to her.

Annie exclaimed at the idea; she could not conceive it possible that any one could

dislike Emma; those delightful dark eyes, those elegant ringlets, and the general grace of her appearance were in her opinion, so strongly indicative of an amiable, lively and ingenuous mind, that nobody could take offence at her. She was most enthusiastic in her praises, and Elizabeth felt gratified. This conversation passed on their way to Miss Millar's home, where she wished to call before starting for a country walk. She led her companion up at once to her own apartments, and whilst she left her for a moment in her dressing-room, to make some arrangements in private, Elizabeth, who to pass the time was looking at some books on the table, was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of George Millar. Her back being turned towards the door, the disguise of her bonnet and cloak prevented his recognising her, and concluding it to be his sister, he advanced hastily, and laying his hand on her shoulder he said :

"My dear Annie," when on her turning her face towards him, he of course discovered his mistake.

He looked excessively confused for a moment, but Elizabeth laughed and took it so easily, that he soon recovered himself; she explained to him why she was waiting

there, and on hearing that they were preparing to take a country walk, he declared that it was a holiday with him to-day, and if they would not object he would accompany them.

"Indeed," he added, "I think it my duty to go with you, or that wicked sister of mine would infallibly walk too far, and make herself ill. She is not to be trusted in the country I assure you."

Elizabeth did not feel inclined to raise any objection to this arrangement, as she was quite as well satisfied with what she saw, as with what she had heard of Mr. Millar, and did not feel disposed to retract her previous declaration in his favor. Their walk proved as agreeable as she could desire, and only left her the wish that she could have such another, and Emma with her.

They were out a considerable time, as George Millar proposed visiting a small farm in which he took much pride, and which particularly delighted Elizabeth. The arrangement of his dairy, the welfare of his lambs, the progress of his poultry, were all subjects exactly to her taste, and she entered heart and soul into the matter: her interest was far too sincere for him to be otherwise than flattered by it, and he

came to the conclusion that she was a very delightful young woman, with more intelligence and a clearer head than any town-bred young lady of his acquaintance. He determined to take her opinion and advice on the subject of making cream cheeses, and resolved to rear a calf which she had admired, instead of sending it to the butcher's the following week. They were left a good deal to entertain each other, as Annie had chosen to unchain a large Newfoundland dog kept at the farm, and gone off in company with it for a gambol in the meadows.

When every part of the establishment had been carefully visited, and some of the hops in the nearest fields inspected, Elizabeth began to think it was time for her to go home; but Annie had not yet rejoined them, and having quite lost sight of her during the last hour, they had nothing to do but to sit down, and wait patiently, if they could, for her appearance. The house, which was only inhabited by a bailiff and his wife, was small but pretty, and Elizabeth was eloquent in her praise of everything she saw, declaring with perfect unreserve how very much she should pre-

fer living in that charming little house, to inhabiting the best mansion in the town.

However, as time passed on, and she remembered the distance she had to walk before reaching home, she began to be rather uneasy, well knowing how extremely displeased Robert would be, if they were late for dinner, as seemed probable. She confided her fears to George Millar, confessing, with perfect candour, that she was very much afraid of her brother's displeasure. He immediately suggested, as a remedy, that if their return to Croydon was deferred later than she liked, she should give them the pleasure of her company at their own family meal; assuring her that there was not the smallest risk of Mrs. Turner's being angry, even if they kept her waiting an hour. At the same time, he said that, for that very reason, he should be sorry to do so, and he, therefore, hoped his sister would soon join them.

At length, after trying their patience till Elizabeth was surprised it did not fail, the truant girl returned; and when her brother attempted to scold her, she laughingly placed her hand over his mouth, and desired him to behave well before her friends, at least; there would be time enough for him to find fault in the course

of the evening—he could keep awake on purpose.

He called her, in reply, a saucy girl, and threatened that another time he would not take her out walking with him; whilst she persisted in asserting that it was she to whom he was obliged for his excursion, and that she and Miss Watson could have done perfectly well without him.

They then commenced their return homewards, and George told his sister to invite Miss Watson to dine with them on the plea of being too late for her own dinner. Elizabeth expressed herself exceedingly ready to comply, and it was so settled.

When within half a mile of the town, they met Alfred Freemantle, who was enjoying a stroll on his escape from the office. Uninvited, he joined them, and placed himself by the side of Miss Millar, who was leaning on her brother's arm. She put up her lip in a very contemptuous way, and a moment after, changed to the other side, and found a refuge for herself between Elizabeth and George, where she was safe from him. He saw the manœuvre, and mortified at it, tried in his turn to mortify her, by enthusiastic praises of the absent Emma.

“What a sweet, charming girl she is—I don't know when I have seen anything

which pleased me better—those sparkling black eyes, and the clear olive complexion, are perfection in my eyes; and her manners—so sweet—so ladylike, she is quite bewitching.”

“You cannot praise her too much for me,” replied Annie, quite sincerely; “I have been raving about her ever since last night, and so long as you make use of suitable and judicious terms, you may extol her beauty till you are worn out with fatigue.”

“I intend to write an acrostic on her name,” said he, in a most self-satisfied tone, “perhaps you did not know it; but I am considered rather to shine in that way; I *have* made capital verses.”

“So you have told me, Mr. Freemantle, before; indeed, I remember, on one occasion, your presenting me with some lines which, from the style and manner, I should have judged impossible to be your own composition, but for your affirmation of that fact; of course, therefore, I am aware of your talents.”

“I am only too much flattered by your remembering the circumstance at all, Miss Millar—you don’t happen to recollect the lines, do you?”

“No, indeed: I remember the fact, be-

cause I know a cousin of mine who was staying with us at the time, amused himself with cutting the paper into the smallest possible morsels, and I only read the lines once in consequence."

The utter carelessness with which this assertion was made, would have been sufficient to overwhelm an ordinarily modest man, but he did not appear distressed, only interposing with a declaration that he thought he could remember the little poem—accordingly he commenced reciting—

"A nimated airy angel
N otice now my humble line ;
N ever was there such a feeling
I n my breast, as now is stealing,
E re I saw that form divine.'"

"Pray spare me the rest," exclaimed Annie, almost suffocated with laughter, which she vainly tried to repress, "my modesty is too sensitive to stand such praises, so I entreat you to allow us to exercise our imaginations as to the remainder."

"Do you know when I began that I wanted to make every word in the line

commence with the same letter, but I could not manage it ; it was too much for me."

"I can easily believe that," replied Mr. Millar, gravely. "I think it was too much for my sister too ; you should not indulge young girls with such flattery : depend upon it, it's very bad for them."

"Oh, dear no," replied he, "a little flattery delicately administered makes way amazingly amongst those whose hearts are soft and easily touched."

"Amongst which number I conclude you reckon me?" enquired Annie.

"No, indeed, you are hard-hearted and cruel to a degree to drive twenty such men as me to despair."

"I hope I shall never be reduced to do so desperate a deed ; twenty such men would be a formidable phalanx—more than I could stand at all," said Miss Millar, arching her eye-brows and apparently looking on the point of laughing again.

He looked suspiciously at her, and said, after considering her countenance a moment,

"I have not made more than the first couplet of my address to Miss Emma Watson, do you think you can help me?"

"Let us hear your effusion—we will see what we can do," replied Annie.

"Emma, elegant, enchanting,
Merry maiden, much is wanting—"

"But, then, I don't know what to say next—what *do* you think is wanting?" said Mr. Alfred in the most earnest tone possible.

"I should finish it this way," suggested Annie.

"My melodious muse to make
All I wish it for thy sake."

"Thank you, indeed," cried he, "what condescending goodness on your part to stoop to such kindness as to assist me with such poetical rhymes. Do you ever compose yourself?"

"How can you ask—have you not read a small volume of poems entitled, 'Way-side Flowers?'—and did you not know they were mine?"

"No, indeed! How delighted I am to be acquainted with a real author! I shall never rest till I have procured and read your poems."

"I wish you success in the search then," replied Annie, "and repose and quiet when you have succeeded."

In those days, Authors and Authoresses were far less plentiful than now; when not to know, or be nearly related to one, is a more remarkable circumstance by far, than the contrary; and Alfred Freemantle really believing Annie's assertion, looked and felt most highly exalted at the supposed discovery.

He continued, during the rest of the walk, to plague her with questions as to what species of stanzas—what measure—what style of writing she preferred, until Annie on getting free from him at length, burst into a strong invective against his stupidity and want of common sense.

Her brother quietly told her she deserved it—she liked to play on his dullness of perception, and it served her right when it recoiled on her own head. Annie denied that there was any malice in what she said, it was only a little fun, and was not really, at all naughty.

They reached their house at last, and the two ladies, being both tired and hungry, were extremely glad of rest and dinner. Elizabeth could not help wondering at herself for what she was doing, and where she was; but the human mind soon gets accustomed to any circumstances, and she enjoyed herself too much to feel any regret

at the change of scene. Their little quartett was extremely pleasant and good-humoured; she was introduced to Mr. Millar's children, and was much pleased with them; and the little things, with the intuitive perception peculiar to children, clung to her with great delight and affection.

After spending, by far the most cheerful evening which she could remember, since they were snowed up at Mr. Howard's she was escorted home by George Millar, and parted from him with so friendly a feeling, that she could hardly believe he was only a two days' acquaintance.

CHAPTER X.

VERY different was the evening her sisters had been passing. Robert was engaged in his office—Margaret engrossed with a new romance that morning procured—and Jane, being tired, and having nothing to amuse her, was more than usually cross to Emma; finding fault with the manner in which she had performed some needle-work, and going on from that to a general charge of indifference, indolence, and constant inattention.

Emma sighed, and could not help throwing back a mournful thought to passed times, when she had felt herself the pet of her dear uncle, and the idol of a whole

household; or later, when she had flattered herself with the notion that she was the first object with Mr. Howard. It seemed now, quite like recalling a dream, when she looked back to those happy days; so suddenly, and entirely, had the scene been changed. Then she began to wonder when she should hear from Miss Osborne—and what she would say—how she would bear the idea of being called into a court of justice; whether her family would not be angry at it—and what the result would be. Would Tom Musgrove yield or not?—or would Robert persist in his determination; and in these silent meditations the evening passed heavily away. She was glad when Elizabeth came home; her entrance brought some little diversion to their scene, as she had something new to tell; and Jane, though rather inclined to resent any one having so much enjoyment without her, was too well satisfied with the union which she anticipated between Elizabeth and Mr. Millar, to feel any very strong indignation on this occasion.

Bed time came, and Emma, feeling wretchedly depressed and miserable, could not refrain from the luxury of finishing the evening with a good fit of crying,

which relieved her heart, and soothed her to sleep.

Early the next morning Elizabeth went to Emma's room, and began to express to her how very much she was pleased with George Millar, his sister, his children, his house, his farm, and all that belonged to him. Then she declared that, of all situations she had ever seen, she thought she should like the neighbourhood of Croydon for a home, —and, indeed, she should not object to live in the town altogether.

Emma listened and acquiesced in it all; she had not recovered her spirits—and though trying to enter into her sister's hopes and wishes, she could hardly summon energy sufficient to do so.

The morning passed much as usual until post time, when Emma received an answer to her note to Miss Osborne, and Robert at the same time was favored with a letter from Tom Musgrove. The four ladies were in the drawing-room, and Emma was looking over the dispatch from Miss Osborne, when her brother entered and communicated to them all the contents of Tom's letter. It was short and decisive.

"Dear Sir,

"The receipt of your letter of yesterday surprised me a good deal. I am extremely sorry that there should have been any misunderstanding of the sort; but I am sure your amiable sister will at once admit that my attentions to her have always been limited within the bounds of friendship, such as our long acquaintance justifies, and such as I have paid to twenty other young ladies before her eyes. With kind compliments to the ladies of your family, I have the honor to remain,

"Dear Sir,

"Yours faithfully, &c. &c."

Margaret thought it incumbent on her immediately to go off in a fit of hysterics on hearing this read, sobbing out between whiles, that he was a cruel, cruel man, and she never meant to care more about him.

"Do have done with that confounded noise," said Robert impatiently, "for there's no getting a word of sense from a woman when she's in that state, and heaven knows

it's little enough one can reasonably expect at any time."

Margaret's sobs did not cease at this gentle request, and Robert grew more angry.

"By Jove, Margaret, if you don't stop, I'll leave you to make the best of your own matters, and neither meddle nor make any more in it."

Afraid that he might really keep his word, she ceased at last, and he then enquired what Emma had heard from Miss Osborne. Emma read the passage in which Miss Osborne replied to her assurance that Margaret still considered Mr. Musgrove engaged to her; it merely thanked her for the information, stated that she would warn her friend, and wished Miss Margaret a happy termination to her engagement. The rest of the letter was about subjects quite unconnected with Tom Musgrove, and uninteresting to any one but Emma. Miss Osborne mentioned one thing which gave her peculiar pleasure; her marriage with Sir William was to take place after Easter, and they were going down to spend the spring and summer months at Osborne Castle, which her brother had lent to them, whilst Sir William Gordon was determining on

the plan and elevation of a new mansion, which he intended to build on his property. Miss Osborne earnestly hoped that Emma would once more visit there, and declared she quite looked forward with impatience to a future meeting.

She did not wish to read this aloud, as she shrunk from the appearance of boasting about her grand acquaintance, but neither Jane nor Margaret would allow her to rest in peace until she had made known the principal contents of her letter; and a sentence containing the information that they had seen Mr. Howard, who had spent a few days in town lately, was the only information she eventually kept to herself.

Margaret's curiosity having materially aided in restoring her composure, she was soon able to enquire of her brother what he intended to do. He repeated all he had formerly asserted, and Emma heard it with horror; she escaped from the room to consider what she had better do, and after much thought, decided on writing at once to Miss Osborne, informing her of what was threatened. She sat down and wrote accordingly :

“ Dear Miss Osborne,

“ I hope you will not consider me in any way to blame, if the information I have to communicate is disagreeable to you. I am sorry to say that Mr. Musgrove has been so unprincipled as entirely to deny the engagement, which *we* know subsisted between him and my sister; and what grieves me still more is, that my brother, convinced that there actually was an engagement, declares he will bring an action against Mr. Musgrove, unless he immediately fulfils it. The idea that we shall have to appear in a court of justice, frightens me very much, and I thought it right to give you early notice of his intention that you might not be taken by surprise. My brother is so fixed in his resolution, that I cannot see the smallest probability of an escape for us, unless Mr. Musgrove can be persuaded to act up to his promise. I know Lord Osborne has great influence with him, and for the sake of your family, and his own character and respectability, he might perhaps be persuaded by him to do so; but with a man of such a character, my sister's chance of happiness would be

small, and I cannot wish for their marriage, even to save myself from what I so greatly dread. I feel I am wrong and selfish in shrinking from an exertion which I suppose is my duty, and perhaps after all, when there are so many troubles in life, one difficulty more or less ought not to disturb me so much. I am truly rejoiced at your bright prospects, and shall indeed have great pleasure at any time you name, in witnessing your domestic happiness; I assure you that your kind invitation has given me more pleasure than anything I have lately experienced.

“ Believe me, dear Miss Osborne,

“ Very truly yours, &c. &c.”

We must follow this letter to London, and describe the effect which it produced on the parties concerned, and the results which arose from it. Miss Osborne was sitting in the breakfast-room in Portman Square when it was brought to her. Sir William Gordon was beside her on the sofa, assisting at her late breakfast, in the English sense of the word, and playfully telling her that he never meant to wait so long for his,

when he was settled at home. As she looked at the address.

"Here is a letter," she observed, "from that charming Emma Watson with whom you were pleased to carry on such a flirtation just before you proposed to me."

"I flirt with Emma Watson," exclaimed he, "I deny it entirely—I never flirted with any girl in my life."

"What have you forgotten it all—did you not take a walk with her in the park—a sketch in a cottage—and a drive in a cart? do you mean to deny all that?"

"By no means, I only deny entirely all flirtation whatever—what time—what spirits—what inclination could I have to flirt with her, when I was doing hard service to win your most intractable and hard-hearted self."

"Not so very hard-hearted, I think, Sir William," said she, blushing.

"Stern enough to drive an ordinary man to despair, Rosa," replied he, looking admiringly at her; "and had I not been as obstinate as yourself, we never should have been sitting as we now are."

"Well, you may as well let my hand alone, I think, for I want the use of it to open my letter," and accordingly the young

lady broke the seal, as soon as she could get possession of her hand.

"Let me look over you," said he, leaning forward with his cheek close to hers.

She repulsed him, and placed herself in the corner of the sofa, where he was forced to be satisfied with watching her face. He saw her cheek glow, and her eye flash, whilst her brow contracted with repressed indignation, and she seemed on the point of tearing the letter in two. She did not, however, but dropped her hands in her lap, and sat for a minute looking upwards earnestly, as if trying to recal some past event, then frowned again. Her lover extended his hand towards her, and exclaimed—

"My dear Rosa, what is the matter, your looks quite frighten me—do let me see this letter."

"Take it," said she, "and see what intolerable impertinence is threatened me."

He read it attentively, then said—

"I am quite bewildered—completely mystified—what have you got to do with all this—and what does it mean?"

"Ah, you may well be astonished," she replied; "don't you see what is threatened? imagine *me*, a peer's daughter, dragged into the Assize Court as a witness in an action

between Margaret Watson and Thomas Musgrove, for a breach of promise of marriage. Can you realise the scene? It would be novel and interesting, I think."

"Extremely so, and I do not see why you should mind it: you will, of course, be treated with all proper respect and consideration, and justice must be done. Don't make yourself unhappy about that."

"You are joking, Sir William; and I shall be angry presently."

"No, don't pray; I should not like that—but tell me how you happened to become the confidante of this charming Margaret; I did not know your friendship extended to the whole family."

"Neither does it—it is only Emma I care for," replied she; and she then proceeded to explain to Sir William all the circumstances attending their involuntary audience of Musgrove's courtship, and her reason for keeping it quiet.

"Caught listening, eh!" ejaculated Sir William; "I do not wonder that you shrink from being called on to avow it in public. What a pity that you did not start out and cry 'ho!' to them both; from all accounts they deserved it."

"That's all very well, and you may amuse yourself with laughing at me, if you

like; but tell me how can I avoid this difficulty—must I appear in court?”

“Certainly, if you are subpoenaed to appear—there is no help for that.”

“How coolly you treat it—why is it not you instead of me it has happened to?”

“Only because I was not one of the eavesdroppers.”

“I assure you, Sir William, if you go on laughing at my distress, I will punish you for it.”

“I am excessively sorry for your distress, my dear Rosa, but I must think it quite unfounded.”

“Well, there’s one thing certain, I warn you: if I have to appear in this business, we must defer our marriage; I could not appear as a bride and a witness during the same month.”

Sir William started up from the cushion where he was lounging, and looking fixedly at her, exclaimed—

“You are not serious.”

“Perfectly so, Sir William; and I see you are so now,” replied Miss Osborne.

“Then you shall have no occasion to put your threat in execution,” said he, with an air of determination; “let us talk the matter over seriously, Rosa.”

“Ah, I am glad I have brought you to

your senses, at last ; now consider, if we could do as Emma advises, and persuade this Mr. Musgrove to marry, as he ought, there would be an end of all trouble in the affair."

"To you, perhaps, but not to Miss Margaret ; I dare say her amiable husband would beat her every day."

"Now don't relax into your indifference again, and be provoking! Oh, here comes Osborne; let's explain the case to him, and see what he says on the subject."

Lord Osborne, at the moment, entered the room, and his sister tried to make him comprehend the facts that had occurred.

"I think," said he, after hearing her story, "that Musgrove has behaved very ill—very ill, indeed."

"No doubt of that, my dear brother," replied she; "but what do you think of this Mr. Watson's proposal?"

"Just what we might expect from a lawyer, that he would go to law ; it's his business, Rosa," replied her brother.

"But it's not my business to be obliged to appear in public as a witness in this ridiculous matter. If he likes to make his sister's *affaires de cœur* the subject for conversation and coarse jokes through the county, it is all very well, but I cannot see

why I am to be implicated in a transaction which reflects nothing but discredit on all the parties," said Miss Osborne, with increasing dissatisfaction.

"Especially to those who are detected in listening, Rosa," suggested Sir William Gordon.

"And poor Emma too," continued she, pretending not to hear him, "she evidently dreads the threatened exposure; I am quite concerned about it for her."

"Naturally enough," said the lover, in the same tormenting tone; "it makes every one sorry to be found out."

"Really, Sir William Gordon," said Miss Osborne, drawing up her slight figure with an air of great indignation, "if you can suggest nothing that is more agreeable than such reflections, we shall be better without you; and I recommend you to leave us to take care of ourselves."

It was haughtily said—for her quick temper was roused; he knew her well, and did not mean that she should obtain a sovereign rule over him. He loved her for her spirit—but he was determined not to crouch to it—and rising, he made her a grave bow, and left the room. She looked after him anxiously, expecting he would return, or at least, give her one more glance, but he

did not, and the door closed before she could make up her mind to speak again.

"What do you want me to do, Rosa?" said her brother, "I think it will be easy to prevent all this, if it plagues you and your friend so much; I will speak to Tom myself, and see if I cannot persuade him to keep his promise."

"Ah! do, if you can, Osborne; of course the girl wants to marry him; and if he will do that, we shall be left in peace. Poor Emma seems very unhappy—look at her letter."

Lord Osborne received it eagerly and read it through.

"Poor thing," said he, quite compassionately, "how soon, Rosa, may girls marry after their father's death?"

"Oh! that's a matter of taste! and I don't think it signifies in this matter at all. If we could only get Mr. Musgrove to acknowledge his engagement, he may take his own time for marrying."

Her brother was on the point of saying that he was not thinking of him, but he let it pass—and, after a moment's consideration, added:

"Then you think there would be no harm in *engaging* a girl, even if she could not marry immediately."

"Oh! I don't know, this engagement was formed before old Mr. Watson died, and that makes a difference. Perhaps, if people are very particular, they might not like to commence a courtship under such circumstances."

"Well, what can I do?"

"Find Mr. Musgrove—tiresome man that he is—and tell him that, as the fact of his engagement is known, and, consequently, he is as certain to have a verdict against him, as this Mr. Watson is determined to try for it, the only thing for him to do, to avoid such a result, is to act like a man of honor. If he refuses, and by that means draws me into any thing so repugnant to my feelings as appearing in a court, he can never expect to be noticed by us again; and if *we* set the example, every one will throw him off—he will be scouted in the neighbourhood, and can never dare to shew his face again at home. Tell him this, and if I do not greatly mistake the man he will yield."

"I will try what I can do, Rosa, but I wish Gordon had undertaken it—he has so many more words than I have?"

"And if you cannot succeed with him, we must have recourse to Mr. Watson, the attorney, and try what we can do to stop his proceedings," continued Rosa. "Per-

haps a little bribery, judiciously applied, might induce him to relinquish his intention, and save any further trouble."

"We shall see about that," replied he, "but, in the meantime, I will look for Musgrove, and try my skill on him.

"Could you find Sir William, Osborne," said Rosa, blushing, "and tell him that I should like to speak to him—or no, perhaps, if you tell him only what you are going to do, it will be better."

"I heard him leave the house, Rosa," said Lord Osborne, quite innocently, "but, if I see him at the club, I will tell him what you say."

Miss Osborne bit her lip and made no reply ; she did not like to shew the empire which Sir William had over her feelings—nor would she readily have acknowledged the anxiety she could not avoid entertaining with regard to his quitting her so gravely. She had discovered that he would not be played with and tormented for her amusement, and she dared not attempt to trifle with him as she might have done with a less resolute man. Her brother left her and she spent the rest of the morning alone, and very uneasy. She was in no humour to receive visitors, and was entirely disinclined for any occupation. She kept on telling

herself it was not because Sir William was absent that she was dissatisfied, it was only because she herself was threatened with a disagreeable incident; then she fell into a train of wondering thought as to what Sir William intended to do, where he was gone, and whether he would soon return to Portman Square. Her heart beat every time she heard the knocker, though she knew his hand too well to be deceived in that. At length, a note was brought to her with an assurance that the bearer was waiting. It was in his handwriting, and she opened it with trepidation. The style surprised her.

“ Sir William Gordon’s compliments to Miss Osborne, and he has the happiness of informing her that affairs are placed on a satisfactory footing with regard to Mr. Musgrove; but, as Sir W., has undertaken to communicate the result of the interview to Miss Watson and her sister, he wishes to know whether Miss Osborne would recommend him to go in person to Croydon—and if so, whether she has any commands for him.”

Rosa read the note over three times before she could make up her mind to the an-

swer she should return. She felt it deeply; the tone, the meaning, all conveyed a sort of covert reproach to her. She was sorry and angry at the same moment; and she was quite undecided whether to yield to or resent his conduct. After much deliberation she hastily wrote:

“Miss Osborne’s compliments to Sir William Gordon, and as she finds it impossible to give an opinion without understanding more of the circumstances, she begs he will favor her with a call this afternoon, to explain what arrangements he has made.”

No sooner was this note despatched than she bitterly regretted having sent such a one, and felt she would have given anything in the world to recall it, when too late. She could think of nothing else, of course, and being quite indisposed for any amusement she refused to accompany her mother in the afternoon drive, but remained sitting alone in the drawing-room. Engrossed with her own thoughts, she did not hear him enter, and was not aware of his presence till he spoke, and gravely observed,

“I am here, Miss Osborne, according to your commands; may I request you will let me know your further wishes.”

"You are still offended, Sir William," replied she, looking up at him; "I thought you would have recovered yourself by this time."

"I cannot so soon forget the repulse I received; and I presume you intended it to be remembered."

"Nay, now don't look like that, I cannot bear it, I was wrong;" said she extending her hand to him. "Forgive me and sit down."

Miss Osborne had not to say she was wrong twice over, nor to repeat the request for forgiveness. He was not tyrannical, though he could not submit to slavery, and a reconciliation was soon effected. When they were able to talk of anything besides themselves, he described to her his interview with Tom Musgrove. He had found him insolent and angry—disposed to resent Mr. Watson's threats as insulting, and Sir William's interference as uncalled-for. His tone, however, was considerably lowered when he ascertained for the first time that his conversation with Margaret had been overheard by two who were quite able to prove the fact. Sir William told him he was authorized by the family of one young lady—indeed as her affianced husband he considered himself bound to step forward

and endeavour to prevent the necessity of her appearing as a witness in a public court: should she, in consequence of Mr. Musgrove's persevering in denying the truth, be compelled to perform so unpleasant a task, it would bring down on him the enmity of the noble family of which the lady was a member, and the universal contempt of the county; whereas, whilst affairs stood as they did at present, the fact of his inconstancy being known to so few, it was evident the whole business might be hushed up, and when he and Miss Watson were married, they might be certain of the countenance and favour of the family at Osborne Castle, and all their connexions.

Tom had hesitated much, and evidently deeply repented the unguarded conduct which had placed him in such an unpleasant predicament; and though he had yielded at last to a conviction of the necessity of the thing, it was with a reluctance which augured ill for the domestic felicity of the future Mrs. Musgrove. Indeed he had told Sir William, with an oath, that if she really compelled him to marry her, Margaret Watson should rue the day; so that upon the whole Sir William was of opinion that the young lady had much better not persist in

her claim, if she had any value for a quiet home.

"I dare say he will not be worse than other men," replied Rosa saucily; "I have a notion that they are all tyrants to women at heart, only some wear a mask in courtship and some do not take that trouble. But they are all alike in the end, no doubt."

"Very possibly, Rosa; suppose you were to carry out your theory and change places with Miss Margaret."

"Thank you; your liberality is overpowering; but though they may be all alike in temper, they are so neither in person nor name—and in neither of these particulars does Mr. Musgrove please me."

It was then settled that Rosa should write to her friend and inform her how matters were going on—it being understood that Tom Musgrove was by the same post to assert his claim to Miss Margaret Watson's hand in a letter to her brother.

CHAPTER XI.

HAD Margaret Watson possessed one particle of proper spirit, the tone and manner in which Tom Musgrove fulfilled his part of the bargain would have been sufficient to cause a total rupture between them; but far from this was the case with her. The fact of being now believed in her declaration, of being known as an engaged young lady, of having a right to talk about wedding-clothes, and sigh sentimentally at the prospect before her; the distinction which all this would give her in a small country town, where every occurrence, from a proposal of marriage down to the purchase of a new pair of shoes, was immediately known

to all the neighbours—this delighted Margaret's weak mind, and set her heart in a flutter of gratified vanity.

To be able to inform all the morning visitors at her brother's house that indeed she was contemplating this important change, that she was yielding to a long and well placed affection, that she had known her dear Tom all her life, and that their mutual attachment had been of many years' standing—to sigh over the prospect of soon leaving her sisters, and trying a new situation, seeking a new home, entering on new duties—all this was perfect ecstasy to her, and on the strength of her engagement she became more than ever peevish and disagreeable to her sisters in private, and more affable and smiling to her associates in public.

Her dear Tom—her absent friend—was introduced on all occasions in her speeches, and most happy would she have been had she been able to introduce him personally to the admiring young ladies of Croydon. Miss Jenkins was dying to see him; Miss Lamb was certain he must be a charming beau; Miss Morgan and her sister were never weary of hearing the colour of his hair, and the style of his equipage.

This was highly gratifying to Margaret,

but she had her little discomforts too. There were some young ladies who shrugged their shoulders and wished Mr. and Mrs. Tom Musgrove might have a quiet house of it—there were others who whispered strange things about the courtship. Miss Lascomb thought it very odd indeed Mr. Musgrove did not come to see his betrothed—of course they knew their own affairs best, but she hoped if ever she were in such a situation, to see a little more devotion and warmth in her swain. Miss Johnston said *she* knew how young men were sometimes caught, that she did, and till she heard the gentleman declare his engagement with a smile, she should not be persuaded that it did not cost him a sigh.

These speeches, though not made to Margaret, were all carefully repeated to her, by some of her many kind friends, who delighted in retailing small ware of the kind. She coloured and pouted, tossed her head, and recommended people to leave affairs alone which did not belong to them, and wondered any people could take such pleasure in interfering in other people's concerns. But *she* knew what it came from, that she did, it was all envy and spite, because she was going to marry a real gentleman, who had nothing to do, and Mr. John-

ston was only an apothecary, and all the world knew that Miss Lascomb had been setting her cap at the writing master for the last three years, and all to no purpose. In her heart, she was really troubled with some misgivings on account of not receiving any communication from Tom—she would have delighted to parade his letters before her admiring confidantes, and her envying female friends, but this pleasure was denied her. All she could do, was to write very often herself, and take care to have a letter directed to him beside her, whenever any of her gossiping acquaintance came to pay her a visit of inspection.

The news from Chichester which about this time arrived gave a very flourishing account of Penelope's affairs. Her lover, notwithstanding his advanced age, appeared far more ardent and energetic than the youthful Tom Musgrove.

In accordance, it was said, with his earnest solicitations, their union was to take place very speedily, and Penelope hoped that the next time she had occasion to write to her sisters, it would be to inform them that she no longer bore the same name as themselves. In the prospects of her two sisters, Emma saw little to console

her for the blight which had fallen on her own; she would have rejoiced with all her heart had she been able to suppose they would be happy, but she could not reconcile herself to the proceedings of either, nor persuade herself, try as she would, that in either case, the motives which led them to engage in a connection so important as matrimony were such as could ensure a blessing with them. In Penelope's case especially, she could view it as nothing but a sale of herself for a certain amount of settlements; she knew there was neither love nor esteem on her side, for she had heard her, in unguarded moments, express sentiments quite the reverse, speaking of her future husband in a slighting tone, and with a contemptuous accent, as if she held him little better than an idiot for the very act of marrying her. As to Margaret, though she really seemed in love, after a fashion, with Mr. Musgrove, there was too evident a reluctance on his part, and too much want of delicacy on hers, to leave, as Emma imagined, the least chance of anything happier than a total rupture between them; and taking everything into consideration it seemed to her that such an event would be by much the most desirable circumstance that could occur.

Emma herself was, for some time, a close prisoner Mrs. Watson found so much for her to do, that she had scarcely time to stir from the nursery, except when she took a walk with Janetta, who was now almost entirely confided to her care. The child loved her dearly ; and had her exertions as nursery governess given the smallest satisfaction to her sister-in-law, had they even been treated by her as an equivalent for board and maintenance, she would have been less uncomfortable.

But whilst she was spending her whole time in unremunerated, and indeed unacknowledged services, she was perpetually reminded of her entire dependence on Robert, and taunted with her uselessness, her idle habits, and her fine lady manners. The numerous visitors, who dawdled away a morning hour in Mrs. Watson's parlour, were apt to expatiate on her extraordinary liberality and kindness in receiving her three sisters as her guests, little imagining that the two elder paid for their board out of their scanty incomes, and that the younger compensated for the misery she endured, under the show of patronage, in a way yet more advantageous to her grudging but ostentatious relatives.

At length, a grand event occurred. Mr.

Millar invited them all to a dinner party, and Annie hinted that it was to be followed by a dance and a supper. They were all asked, and though Jane demurred about Emma, Robert overruled her.

"We must let the girl have a chance," said he; "if she is never seen, there's no chance of any of those young fellows proposing for her."

Jane had no wish that they should. She felt Emma's value far too strongly to be at all inclined to part with her. Her caps had never been so nicely made—her stockings so carefully darned—or Janetta's wardrobe so well attended to, as since she had turned over every trouble of the kind to Emma. But as she did not choose to own these considerations, she was obliged to assent to Robert's proposal, and Emma was to go to the Millars'. In spite of their mutual wishes, she had seen very little of Annie Millar; their meetings had been hindered in every possible way by Mrs. Watson, who was always apprehensive that Emma would complain, aware, as she was, that she had real reason to do so; but Mrs. Watson had skilfully contrived that the drawing back from her acquaintance should appear the voluntary act of Emma, a notion which cooled Annie's friendship towards her, until

Elizabeth, with her usual frankness, had on one occasion afforded an explanation of the matter. The result of this was an energetic attempt, on Miss Millar's side, to secure her society for the evening in question, and as she had appealed to Robert as well as Jane, she was successful.

They went accordingly, and Emma's quick eyes were immediately caught by the difference of manner which George Millar displayed towards Elizabeth, compared with the rest of the party. To the others he was open, cordial, and kind, with an address which if not exactly polished, was at least far removed from vulgarity; but to Miss Watson he was hurried and awkward, apparently eager to please to a degree which deprived him of the self-possession necessary for that end. Elizabeth too, looked shy and conscious when their eyes met, though evidently expecting and wishing that he should take his stand beside her chair, which she had fortunately secured in such a position, that after walking forward to receive his visitors, he was able to fall back again, and resume his conversation with her. Emma saw this with satisfaction, and venturing, in spite of her own disappointments, to speculate on the future, she fancied that at least her

dear sister Elizabeth would secure a happy home for herself.

Annie Millar seated herself by Emma's side soon after the Watson party entered the room, and began warmly expressing her pleasure in at length seeing her in her brother's house. Emma assured her in reply, that it was not want of inclination that had kept her away, but want of leisure, for she added quite simply :

"I am governess to my little niece, and have not, therefore, much time to spare for any other purpose. I dare say my sister-in-law told you so."

"No indeed," said Annie warmly, and colouring with indignation, "she never said anything of the kind; she always excused you on the plea of studies or occupations for your good which you had to pursue, and boasted of her kind and attentive care for your benefit, without once hinting that she was under obligations to you, which the hospitality of which she boasts so much can ill-repay."

"Oh hush, Miss Millar," replied Emma blushing deeply, "you must not indeed talk so: if my brother receives me into his house, the least I can do is to take care of his child in return, and so lighten the trouble which I cannot help giving."

"But, my dear Miss Emma, excuse my taking the liberty of saying that if you were governess to any other lady's child, you would not only be supposed to earn your board and lodging, but some fifty or sixty pounds in addition, so that in fact Mrs. Watson is the obliged party in this concern."

Miss Millar was called away at the moment to receive some other visitor, and when able again to return to her seat, she observed :

"That was a most fortunate interruption, for it certainly saved me from saying something unpardonably impertinent. I am, I have been told, much too apt to speak my feelings on all subjects, without sufficiently considering, times, places, and persons. How well your sister looks to-night."

"Which sister?" enquired Emma.

"Oh Miss Watson; I never could admire your sister Margaret, though I know many people who do ; neither she nor Mrs. Watson, who is rather in the other extreme, are at all to my taste."

"Elizabeth looks very happy," observed Emma.

"I am sure she deserves to be so," replied Annie with enthusiasm, "she is such a very amiable person, I know few

with whom I more enjoy a day's intercourse. It always seems to do me good to hear her talk, she makes so light of difficulties, and is so cheerful. To me, who I believe am rather too apt to grumble, she is quite a lesson I assure you."

"I am delighted to hear you say so," replied Emma, with a look that shewed how perfectly sincere was the expression she used.

Though Annie was frequently called away by the necessity of receiving other visitors, she took every opportunity she could command of returning to Emma's side, and conversing with her in the most friendly way. During the intervals when she was obliged to withdraw, Emma looked round the room, to see how the others were employed or amused. Mrs. Turner was discoursing eloquently with Mrs. Watson, who was evidently bored exceedingly, and hardly listening at all; her thoughts as well as her eyes seemd to turn constantly to an individual of the party unknown to Emma, a tall and pleasant looking man, who stood by a nice looking elderly lady, and seemed to be making himself very agreeable to her. Margaret had no one to talk to, and was busy in arranging her tucker in a satisfactory way, and smoothing her gloves from

the tips of the fingers upwards. Robert was hungry, and consequently quite unable to enter into conversation with any one. He was faintly trying to hide the violent yawns which were produced by the suspension of feeling—the uneasy state of expectancy in which he was kept. Emma could read his impatience in the peculiar twitching about his eyes, and the spasmodic way in which his hands closed at intervals, as if grasping some imaginary knife and fork. There were two other gentlemen of the party whose names she ascertained from her young friend; one a tall, stiff, elderly man, with an erect carriage, and rather disappointed expression of countenance, she learnt was a Captain Tomlins, an old soldier, who played a remarkably good rubber at whist; the other was the clergyman of the parish, who had but just returned from Bath, and consequently was unknown to Emma. He was a mild-looking, middle-aged man, with a very bald head, and a small quantity of silver hair; his countenance was singularly pleasing and inviting, and there was an earnest kindness in his manner which charmed her. He stooped and was very round shouldered, whilst a slight appearance of lameness arising from the gout which had driven him to Bath,

interested Emma peculiarly in him, because it reminded her of her father. The other individual who occupied so much of Jane's attention, Emma was likewise informed was the doctor of the parish, and one of the principal objects of interest to half the ladies of the town. Annie assured her his reputation as a doctor was wonderful; he made all his patients pleased with themselves, and consequently pleased with him likewise; indeed he had a sort of harmless way of making love to the ladies under his care, which was very captivating to most people.

"And are you one of his patients?" enquired Emma, "or only an amateur admirer of his?"

"Oh, I was never any one's patient," replied Annie; "I am never ill; and as to being an admirer of his, indeed I do not think I ever could admire a doctor—I have a decided aversion to the profession altogether."

"I never liked it," observed Emma, "until I became acquainted with my brother Sam, and for his sake I have been quite reconciled to it."

"Yes I can understand that, I think George could reconcile me to anything," replied Miss Millar with an expression of feel-

ing resting on her open countenance, which Emma thought quite bewitching; "but after all a doctor's is an odious profession: to be eternally dinned with complaints and pains, and always administering drugs and mixtures in which I dare say they have no faith all the time, must require a stock of extraordinary patience. I wonder how that man can go smiling and complimenting through the world as he does."

"But you look only at the disagreeable side of the profession," returned Emma; "you should consider it as the means of alleviating suffering, relieving distress—perhaps prolonging the most valuable life; if you think of the good a doctor can do, you will form a higher estimate of the profession."

"Yes, but then all those wise thoughts do not come of themselves into my poor brain; it is only those as clever and sedate as you who can suggest them, and in spite of it all, I am afraid I shall go on always hating the profession all my life."

Their conversation was cut short by a summons to dinner, when owing to there being a preponderance of ladies in the party, Annie and Emma walked in together. At the table, however, they were separated; and Emma's ill-luck placed her between her sis-

ter-in-law and her brother, a mis-arrangement which was not perceived until every one was seated, and which Mrs. Watson then insisted should not be changed.

Jane was particularly cross; she had expected the distinction of leading the way to the dining-room in company with the master of the house, and she saw instead a quiet-looking, plainly-dressed lady precede her. Not knowing who the stranger was, and feeling all the right of being first, which as niece to Sir Thomas she invariably claimed, the indignant blood mounted to her cheeks. The hope, however, that Mr. Morgan the doctor would take care of her instead for a moment tranquillized her mind; but when the place he should have occupied was officiously filled by the whist-playing Captain Tomlins, who cared nothing for the right of precedence and only desired to reach the dining-room quickly, her indignation was with difficulty repressed; and as she looked over her shoulder in leaving the room, and saw Elizabeth following with Mr. Morgan, her anger rose to a climax.

"I wonder who that is walking just in front of *me*," said she to her companion.

"I am sure I don't know, ma'am—I was thinking she must be a stranger;" replied Captain Tomlins anxiously snuffing up the

scent of dinner ascending from the lower regions of the house. "The Millars always give such good dinners."

"It's very odd," continued Mrs. Watson, "how little attention is paid to rank; it seems to be getting quite the fashion now to set aside all the old distinctions. Formerly neither men nor women thought of pushing themselves out of their places, but now all that is forgotten, and one may be obliged to walk in to dinner behind you don't know who, and often conducted by some one who has no right to put himself forward."

"Very true, ma'am, such things may happen—but you know at least who is leading you, and I conceive that as an officer in the service of his Majesty, I have a perfect right to walk before any of our present company, excepting always our host. I am sure you must agree with me."

"Upon my word," said Mrs. Watson, with an angry little laugh. "I was not at all aware of your rank being so very high, or entitling you to such very great distinction. However, I dare say it's all right, and I shall find myself, no doubt, soon walking in behind the old sexton's wife, or taking the hand of the parish clerk to the table."

As they had reached the table, by the time she had made this speech, Captain

Tomlins did not trouble himself to answer her, being intently occupied in counting the dishes which stood before him, as resting his hands on the edge of the table, and firmly compressing his lips, he bent forward to take a survey of the shining covers, as if half-expecting to be able to penetrate their substance, and ascertain their contents. Mrs. Watson tossed her head in angry disdain, and was forced to soothe her agitated feelings by scrutinising the way in which the party on the opposite side disposed themselves. The doctor, whom she had vainly coveted as a companion, was seated between Elizabeth and Margaret, the former having a seat at the corner next her host's chair, so that Mr. Morgan was not likely to be much engrossed by her conversation. Mr. Bridge, the rector, and Annie Millar filled up the rest of that side, as Mrs. Turner took the head of the table.

These were well placed, as Mrs. Turner delighted in carving, and Annie being exceedingly attached to the old clergyman, whom she had known from childhood, amply compensated to him by her respectful attention for the total neglect with which he was treated by Margaret, and the rude repulsive stare with which she received his first attempt at conversation.

In consequence of her situation, Emma's dinner was exceedingly dull, and right glad was she when the time came for retiring to the drawing-room. Here there was a change of scene, and also a change of companions; for she was able to take a seat by Elizabeth, and learn from her, that she, at least, had found the party very agreeable. Meanwhile Mrs. Watson was venting her indignation against Captain Tomlins, in no very measured terms, for his love of eating, his indifference to good society, and his presumptuous and pushing manner.

The stranger lady, whose name had not yet been made known, enquired if it was her neighbour of whom she was speaking, and having received from Mrs. Watson an abrupt and haughty affirmation, she turned to Mrs. Turner, and informed her that she formerly knew him, and added, that they had enjoyed some agreeable conversation together about old times and former acquaintances. Mrs. Watson, on hearing this, eyed her with increased disdain and suspicion, and moving away to the other side of the fireplace, she flitted her handkerchief before her face, as if the very air were laden with impurity by her presence. With head thrown back, and lips closely pressed to-

gether, she seemed determined to prevent any more of her words being wasted in such a presence.

Their party was soon after joined and enlivened by a number of young ladies, and a fair proportion of young men. The Miss Morgans, sisters to the doctor, the Miss Jones and their brothers, children of a wealthy baker deceased; the owner of a flourishing paper mill in the neighbourhood, together with the whole of his large family, four sons and three daughters, rejoicing in the name of Lamb, the eldest daughter being an enthusiastic friend of Margaret's; and two or three families of great elegance and distinction in the neighbourhood; families who enjoyed the advantage of having houses quite in the country, surrounded with poplars and laurels, and no connection with any trade or business; these formed the *élite* of the party. There were several unconnected young men, amongst whom Mr. Alfred Freemantle appeared conspicuous; and swaggering up to Emma's side, declared that he meant to make that the *ne plus ultra* of his hopes for the evening. Annie, who heard him, maliciously desired he would translate the latin for the benefit of ignorant young ladies; but he

pretended not to hear her request, and went on talking to Emma without pity or cessation.

Whilst Annie Millar was busy dispensing the tea and coffee to her guests, Mrs. Watson approached her, and enquired, who was that little old lady who walked into dinner before her. A wicked light danced in Annie's eyes, for she had noticed Jane's scornful manner, and was excessively pleased at the surprise in store for her.

"Do you not know her?" she replied; "she is my godmother, and is now staying with us on her road to London."

"And her name, tell me that—who is she—who was she—to have the precedence over me, Miss Millar?"

"She is the widow of Sir George Barry, a baronet—who died a year or two ago—there is no family, so the title becomes extinct—she is the kindest, quietest, best old lady in the world, I am sure."

"Bless me," cried Mrs. Watson, growing very red in the face, "you don't say so, sure: a baronet's lady! well really—I never thought of that—I am sure I wish I had known it sooner. Why did you not introduce me."

"She did not think it necessary," replied Annie, quietly; "and we always let her

have her own way—indeed, I believe I ought not to have told you who she is, only I saw you were annoyed at her having the precedence of you, and I thought it would comfort you to find it was not without reason and right.”

“Well, I shall certainly go and talk to her now; but I am sure I don’t know why you should suppose I was annoyed about anything of the sort; I declare I do not mind in the least what I do—or where I go—nobody can be more indifferent about their place than I am, though, of course, I do not like to see a mere nobody put over my head; but a baronet’s lady is quite a different thing; I wonder whether she knows my uncle Sir Thomas—I dare say she does—people of rank usually know one another in London.”

Miss Millar did not try to prevent her going to make the *amende honorable* to Lady Barry, whose quiet features expressed some surprise at the manner in which she was attacked by the hitherto scornful Mrs. Watson; and the repetition of the word “your ladyship” met Annie’s ear as she contemplated them from the other side of the hearth rug.

Mr. Alfred Freemantle continued his battery of small talk in Emma’s ear, and,

at length, in spite of the cold ungraciousness of her manner, which was as far removed as possible from welcome or encouragement, the young gentleman ended his tirade by presenting her with a paper which he declared was a copy of verses in her honour. Emma coldly declined taking it, and his most urgent entreaties could not prevail on her to look at the verses—just at this juncture, Miss Millar joined them, and on understanding the subject in dispute she seized on the paper, and commenced reading the lines aloud. They consisted of the usual jumble about stars and flowers, streams and bowers, wings and other things, hearts, darts, flames and names, which might be expected in the valentine of a school-boy, and Annie read them in such an absurd, mock-heroic tone as made those within hearing laugh most naturally, really thinking, as they did, that it was intended altogether as a burlesque. Alfred Freemantle writhed under this laughter, which he could not take as a compliment, having intended the whole poem to be extremely sentimental: he tried to smile too, but really felt far more inclined to cry, and he shrank back into a corner, there to hide his confusion as well as he could. Annie did not pursue her triumph

farther, but left the poor young man to the mortifying consideration of his own defeat.

When tea and coffee were dismissed, Annie declared it to be her intention to have a dance, which of course all the young people seconded with zeal. There was fortunately amongst the party one lady, who it was known excelled in playing country-dances on the harpsichord, which stood in the drawing-room, an heir loom from Annie's mother. The room was soon prepared, and the young ladies all drew up their heads, and began to look straight before them, as if they did not care the least in the world which of the gentlemen asked them to dance, or whether any did at all. Emma having no intention of standing up herself, drew farther back into a corner, without perceiving that it was the very one where young Freemantle had hidden his diminished head. He quite misinterpreted the action, and dropping down into an empty chair by her side, said with an air intended to be very arch,

"I hope, Miss Watson, you were coming to ask me to dance."

"Indeed I was not," replied Emma, "for I did not see you, but I shall be very happy to do so immediately. Pray, Mr. Free-

mantle, go and dance with any one but myself."

"Unparalleled cruelty," cried he clasp-
ing his hands, and throwing up his chin
into the air. "To ask me to stand up
with any other woman than the fair, the
captivating, the charming object of all my
vows, of all my wishes."

"If you mean me by those expressions,"
replied Emma quite calmly, "and that you
wish to stand up with me, allow me to save
you all further trouble, by the information
that I do not intend to dance at all this
evening."

"Impossible, you cannot be so hard-
hearted—so cruel to your devoted slaves,
as all the men in this room must be—you
cannot be so unjust to your own charms,
so unkind to your own attractions. That
elastic figure, graceful as the weeping wil-
low, was formed to float through the dance
like the water lily on the surface of the
stream. Those fairy feet—those—in short
do you really mean not to dance?"

"Really so," replied Emma.

"Your reason—tell me your reason,
I entreat you, why should you shrink from
bewitching our eyes, and lapping our senses
in Elysium."

"Excuse me, I think I have done enough

in giving you one positive answer ; you have no right to require any reason from a woman : or let this suffice you, I will not because I will not."

"Mr. Freemantle," said Annie, advancing towards them, and effecting an agreeable diversion in Emma's favour, I must request you to stand up ; we can harbour no idle young men in corners here ; you are doomed to make yourself agreeable to one lady for the space of two dances, and only on this condition shall you remain in the room."

"Since then the beauteous Miss Emma will not do me the honor, will you permit me to solicit your hand, Miss Millar."

"No indeed, I am engaged for the whole evening, so you must find a partner somewhere else ; go and ask Miss Morgan or Miss Lamb."

"I obey with the alacrity which your commands must always inspire," and he went accordingly.

Miss Millar stayed a moment after him with Emma,

"I will not ask you to stand up," said she, "after the reason you gave me, but both Mrs. Watson and your youngest sister have joined the set you see. How shall you amuse yourself?"

"Oh, never mind me," replied Emma

cheerfully, "where is Elizabeth—she does not dance surely?"

"No, she's playing cards with my brother and yours, I believe; they went into that little parlour on purpose. Will you join them and look on?"

Before Emma had time to answer, Annie was called away, and a moment after Mr. Morgan came, and taking a chair near her, entered into conversation with the ease of a man accustomed to see much of the world, and mix in good society. She was interested and amused by his conversation, and more especially so when she accidentally discovered that at college he had been well acquainted with Mr. Howard, had since been visiting occasionally in the neighbourhood of Osborne Castle, and knew the whole family. He was a good deal older than Howard he told her, but he had remained some time in the vicinity of Oxford after he began to practise; indeed he had adopted his profession rather late in life, and having a fellowship he had continued single.

All this he communicated to Emma, but he had tact soon enough to discover that his own history, unconnected with the family and neighbourhood of Osborne Castle, interested her but little. He soon there-

fore turned the conversation to that channel again, and discovered that her feelings were certainly deeply concerned in it. Yet he could not quite satisfy himself whether it was the young lord or his former tutor, whose name raised a tinge of blood to her cheek, which he saw to be very becoming. Indeed there were so many reminiscences and peculiar circumstances associated with her intimacy with Miss Osborne, and acquaintance with her brother, they were so strangely implicated in Margaret's affairs, and so much that Emma was ashamed of, was suggested by their names, that she was quite as ready to blush at the memory of them, as at the dearer and more tantalising recollections connected with Mrs. Willis and her brother. Well knowing the art of pleasing, Mr. Morgan allowed her to lead in the subject of the conversation, carefully following the turn which she chose to give it, and trying to read her feelings with his scrutinising eye, whilst he seemed to be all attention to her conversation at the moment. Annie's account of him had not prepossessed her in his favour, yet now she could not deny that he was on the whole an agreeable man. The interval of the two dances passed pleasantly away, but when they were concluded Mr. Morgan left her, and she soon afterwards

stole away to the little room where the card-table was. For some reason, however, which she could not learn, the whist party had been broken up, and she only found sitting there George Millar and Elizabeth, apparently deeply engrossed in a game at chess. She seated herself near them; her sister looked up and smiled, and then resumed her game; no one spoke. Emma took up a folio of prints lying on the table, and amused herself with looking over them. At length her attention was arrested by the sound of her own name. By the voices she learnt the speakers were her sister-in-law and Mr. Morgan, and the first words she heard were, the gentleman saying:

"A very charming girl indeed, Mrs. Watson, that young sister-in-law of yours,"

"You think so—do you admire her?" enquired the lady.

"Very much—she is very handsome, indeed!"

"I cannot agree with you," replied Mrs. Watson, rather tartly; "her features are too irregular to be called handsome; good eyes, perhaps, but her skin is coarse and her features insignificant. I cannot but wonder at your taste."

"Indeed, I must beg leave to differ from you, my dear Mrs. Watson; her features may, perhaps, be rather smaller than real

beauty requires, but the dark glowing complexion—the brilliant eye—the redundant hair, and rich red lips, these reminded me so strongly of yourself, that I cannot give up admiring them, even though you will not agree with me.”

“Well, I don’t know, I never was told she was like me before,” said Mrs. Watson, in a simpering tone, which seemed to speak her propitiated by the incense thus offered to her. “Do you know how she is situated?” added she, “It’s a most unfortunate thing; she was brought up so very much above her situation, in the most foolish, ill-judging way, by an old uncle who died without leaving her farthing; and now she is a beggar, without a sixpence to bless herself with, entirely dependent on her brother’s and my charity. I am sure I am sorry for the poor thing.”

“Yes, indeed,” replied Mr. Morgan, with a really feeling tone, “if that is the case, she is, indeed, to be pitied. Poor thing you may well say.”

“The worst of it is, that both her education, and I must say, her temper, unfit her for her future situation; she must do something for herself—a situation as governess seems the only thing—but with her fine lady notions, I don’t know what to do.”

"If you are wanting to get her such a situation," replied Mr. Morgan, "I think I know of one which would probably suit her. Lady Fanny Allston is wanting a governess for her little girl. The child is extremely delicate. I am in almost daily attendance on it, and I know Lady Fanny always says, 'I don't care for accomplishments, Mr. Morgan; my child can have masters, but it's manners I want—mind and manners—the feelings—the look—and the behaviour of a gentlewoman.' Now would not this exactly suit your sister? The salary is most liberal; and, altogether, I think she might be very happy there."

"Perhaps so, I don't know—you are very kind to think of her—but, indeed, I am not sure that she would be at all suited for the place—and how are we to get it for her. I am sure I don't know."

"Oh! I shall see her ladyship to-morrow, and can mention it to her; only give me authority to ask, and you shall see how soon it will be arranged."

"You are very kind—very obliging—but, indeed, I cannot answer at once; I must speak to my husband about it; but don't mention it to any one else, if you please—my intentions—my wishes with regard to her, are quite confidentially en-

trusted to you, and I wish you not to say any thing on the subject."

Mr. Morgan acquiesced, but Emma did not in this decision.

She had, at first, felt extremely hurt that Mrs. Watson should make her circumstances and situation the subject of unreserved discussion with a man totally unconnected with her family—and that in so loud a tone as to be perfectly audible to any one within a dozen yards of where she sat. But the accent of real interest in Mr. Morgan's voice—and above all, the prospect which he held up of a release from the galling thralldom of her present situation, served to compensate for the want of delicacy in her sister-in-law. She immediately formed a resolution to profit by the offer, if Mr. Morgan would really make good his word; whilst meditating on this plan, she heard her sister-in-law invited to dance again; and her quitting her seat, was immediately followed by Mr. Morgan's turning into the room where she was sitting.

She looked up at him as he entered, and fancied she perceived a slight shade of embarrassment on his countenance, as if he suspected she must have overheard his recent conversation. He drew a chair by her side immediately, and began complimenting

her on her taste for silence and seclusion, as he could not imagine that the two chess players, at the other table, had proved very communicative companions. She readily admitted that they were too much engrossed by their game, to have bestowed a word or thought on her; and then added, that, in consequence of the quiet around her, she had discovered that others were thinking and talking of her in her absence. She colored a little as she added:

"My sister informed you so fully of my circumstances, that it is no use to affect reserve, and you mentioned a plan to her, which, it appears to me, would suit me perfectly well, if you really can make the arrangements you talk of."

"I am sorry you overheard what, I fear, may have appeared impertinent to you," replied he, with a grave and earnest kindness of manner, which would have suited a parent. "But Mrs. Watson is accustomed to speak confidentially to me of family matters; and though I certainly have no right to intermeddle in your concerns, yet permit me to say, no one could have the pleasure of conversing with you for even half an hour, without feeling a degree of interest which would certainly lead them to do every thing in their power to serve you."

Emma smiled and replied,

"If you really want to serve me, Mr. Morgan, the first step to it must be leaving off complimentary speeches; keep them for those whom you have no other means of serving, and speak to the point with me."

He smiled likewise, and rejoined,

"Well, I will keep them for Mrs. Watson, she will not reject them with so much scorn."

"Hush, I will allow nothing personal," said Emma, "I am Mrs. Watson's inmate, and must not listen to reflections upon her. But tell me, if you know, exactly what are the particular qualities required by Lady Fanny for the little girl's governess?"

"First youth, health, and good spirits—lady-like manners, a cultivated mind—a thorough acquaintance with English literature, a taste for the fine arts, and a love both of poetry and nature. Such, as well as I remember, was the catalogue she gave me, and to that she had no objection to add accomplishments, but on this subject she is not particular. She knows that though a woman may perform as well as an amateur musician, may draw or paint pleasingly, and may be tolerably well acquainted with modern languages, it is not more than one in ten who can be so thoroughly grounded

in these accomplishments as to be really able to teach them with any effect—one subject of study is as much as most women can compass, and those who pretend to more are most likely to fail in all.”

Emma listened in silence, and wondered mentally whether the entire oblivion of everything relative to principles—morals—and religion were the result of indifference to such subjects on the part of Lady Fanny, or Mr. Morgan.

“You are silent, Miss Watson,” continued he, after surveying, for a moment, her downcast look and thoughtful expression. “Am I to suppose that my catalogue does not please you—or are you doubtful of my accuracy?”

“No, indeed, I was considering my own sufficiency for such a task.”

“I do not imagine you need doubt that, so far as my judgment goes.”

“But that must be a very little way, Mr. Morgan, the experience of this evening cannot be considered sufficient by those who will require information on the subject, however entirely it may satisfy yourself.”

“You give me credit for less penetration than I would claim, if you suppose my experience is limited to this evening. You

possibly have never seen me before, but we have often met, nevertheless—you did not know that I am a particular friend of your little niece, and deep in her confidence.”

“ Well, I will allow you as much penetration as you choose to claim on this subject—meantime, tell me when will the situation be vacant at Lady Fanny’s?”

“ In about two months, I believe ; I do not know exactly, but if you will authorise me, I will make all necessary enquiries for you.”

“ You may do so, if you please, without absolutely committing me ; and when I know all the particulars I can consult my brother, to whom I hold myself responsible, and whose approbation I must, of course, have.”

At this juncture, the chess table was broken up, and Elizabeth joined Emma. Mr. Millar walked away to make the *amende honorable* to those ladies young and old, whom he had grievously neglected whilst devoting himself to Miss Watson. Elizabeth looked very well pleased with her game ; but she did not seem disposed to talk ; at this moment the noise in the dancing-room attracted their attention, and

they moved to the door to look on. The party were going through Sir Roger de Coverley, in a high state of excitement, especially some of the young gentleman, of whom Mr. Alfred Freemantle was the most conspicuous. He rushed forwards with fury, and rather tore than ran round the figure; at length, when advancing to meet Margaret Watson, who was, like himself, dancing with more vigour than grace, they ran against each other, her foot slipped, and she fell completely into his arms. Not satisfied with this exploit, she made believe to faint, and he was forced to support her out of the circle: one or two people offered to assist, but he rejected their efforts, and half-carried, half led her to the little drawing-room, near which her sisters were standing. Elizabeth and Emma tried to be of service, but, in fact, there was nothing to do; she would have been quite well would she only have held up her head, and sat upright; but whilst she chose to recline on Mr. Freemantle's shoulder—and allow him to keep his arms round her waist, they could do nothing but look on and feel very much ashamed of her.

Emma went to procure a glass of water from the side-board, and meeting Mr. Mor-

gan, asked him to come and see if anything was the matter with her sister, as she hoped his presence would be an inducement to Margaret to resume the use of her senses, and leave off the hugging in which she was indulging Alfred.

Mr. Morgan accompanied Emma, and arrived just in time to see Margaret, after making a slight effort to sit up, sink again on her companion's breast in an attitude of the greatest exhaustion. Throwing an arch glance at Emma as he took the glass of water from her hand, Mr. Morgan said, in an extremely plaintive tone, "Poor thing—that is a complete faint—something must be done for her," and without the smallest warning, he dashed the cold water over her face and neck, plentifully bedewing the young gentleman's coat and embroidered waistcoat at the same time. Margaret started up instantly, and so did Alfred, each shaking off the water, and looking excessively annoyed. Margaret was as red as fire, and whilst dabbing up the drops from her neck and cheeks with her pocket-handkerchief, she exclaimed—

"Good gracious, doctor, is that the way you cure young ladies in a fainting fit."

"Precisely so, my dear Miss Margaret,"

returned he, laughing; "and you are a splendid example of the beneficial effects of my practice. What can be more different, from the languid state in which I found you, than the animation and colour which you now display."

"Upon my honour, Mr. Morgan," murmured Alfred, after he had done his best towards getting himself in good order again, after the share he had enjoyed of the sprinkling, "if that is the way you treat gentlemen, I must really call you to account, sir;" and in a lower tone, he murmured something further about "satisfaction and honour," which was quite indistinct.

"Oh, my dear sir," replied the doctor, quite blandly, "the libation was not intended for you; though your proximity to Miss Margaret made you come in for a portion of it, I assure you I did not mean to throw it away on you at all."

Annie now entered to enquire for Margaret's safety, and expressed herself rejoiced to find that she was apparently well, and without injury. She had feared, she said, from Mr. Morgan being called in, that something very serious had happened.

"Instead of which," whispered he to Miss Millar, "it was only something a little

comic. I wish you had seen it, Miss Annie."

It was soon after this time for the party to separate, Alfred Freemantle insisting on seeing the fair Margaret home, after her accident, and tenderly supporting her through the street. They had not very far to go—but Emma, who was behind them, saw, if she was not very much mistaken, that he had his arm round her waist the whole way, and how Margaret, a woman engaged to another, could allow of such familiarity she could not understand.

She went to bed, firmly resolving if Mr. Morgan's report from Lady Fanny Allston was favorable, to speak immediately to her brother, and arrange everything for her removing there. She thought, for full five minutes, on what Miss Osborne would say, when she heard of her plans, whether she would renew her invitation for her to spend some time with her after Easter; and she spent double that time in considering whether, if she did, and she should again meet Mr. Howard, his manners would be warm or cold, how he would receive her, and what he would think of her undertaking such a situation.

The result of her meditations was that

she would write to Miss Osborne, and explain to her, her plans and wishes, asking her, in case she failed in procuring this situation as governess to Miss Allston, to use her interest in finding her some other suitable to her abilities. This determination she put in practice the next day, and her mind felt relieved when it was done.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. WATSON was so excessively cross after the excitement of last night, that Emma's post in the nursery was really a subject of great self-congratulation to her, for though she did sometimes intrude, and was sure to worry when she did come, still it was better to be secluded from her for several hours as was now the case. In the afternoon, as Emma was walking in a quiet lane on the outskirts of the town, with her little niece, for it was now considered a regular part of her duty to take the little girl out for exercise, she was met by Mr. Morgan returning home on horseback. He immediately stopped to speak to her, and dismounting,

placed himself by her side, and proceeded to tell her the result of his mission that morning to Lady Fanny Allston's. He had been very successful: her ladyship had expressed herself very well satisfied with his representations, and had empowered him to say that she should like an interview with Miss Watson on the first convenient opportunity. He proceeded to relate to her all the particulars as to salary, the comfort and the peculiarities of the situation, described the little girl, and, in short, entered into the most minute particulars relative to it.

Emma, considering him as a man old enough to be her father, and thinking no evil herself, felt no hesitation in listening to him, or allowing him to walk beside her. She certainly would not have chosen to confide in him, but since Jane had imparted her situation, she did not scruple to avail herself of the advantage which that knowledge offered to her. They walked a considerable time, for engrossed by the conversation, she did not reflect where they were going, until Janetta's complaints of fatigue, and entreaties to be carried, reminded her that they were a long way from home. Emma prepared to comply with the

request of the child in such a manner as showed him immediately that the exertion was habitual with her, but he interposed.

"Surely Janetta you do not want to make your pretty aunt ill," said he to the child; "indeed I consider myself, Miss Watson, called on to prevent that; it is enough to kill you. Janetta shall ride on my horse, that will do as well, will it not?"

But Janetta was afraid of the horse, and cried for aunt Emma to carry her.

"She is so very light," said Emma, "I assure you I can do it with ease."

But Mr. Morgan would not allow of it; he took the little girl in his own arms and they turned their steps homeward. The lane in which they were walking opened on the little garden behind Mr. Watson's house, at which Mr. Morgan privately rejoiced, whilst Emma, unconscious that she had done anything in the least imprudent or remarkable in allowing him to walk with her, felt no other emotion than satisfaction at getting Janetta quietly home. She wished much to speak to her brother that evening about Lady Fanny, but he returned to the office after dinner, and she was obliged to postpone it.

Margaret and Mrs. Watson had an invi-

tation out to tea that night, and in consequence, Emma and Elizabeth spent a comfortable evening together. The former told her sister of her plans, her hopes, and her walk with Mr. Morgan. In the first of these she sympathised sincerely, but when she heard of the latter she looked horrified.

"Surely Emma you never could be so excessively imprudent! Walk *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Morgan—what could you be thinking of! Did any one see you?"

"I do not know, I never thought about it—our meeting was quite accidental, Elizabeth, and as he wanted to speak to me, why should I not take that opportunity? I cannot see anything wrong in it: why he is old enough to be my father."

"Your father! what nonsense! he is a single man, and a man at least six ladies want to catch. I hope you were not seen by any one, for depend upon it if you were, the account of your walk will be all over the town to-morrow, and then you will get into a pretty scrape," said Elizabeth with a look of sincere commiseration.

"Why, what harm have I done, Elizabeth?—I am sure I meant none."

"You will have put all the single ladies of Croydon in a passion, that's all, and

made yourself the subject of very unpleasant scandal."

"Well I am very sorry," replied Emma quite humbly: "but as I did not go on purpose to meet Mr. Morgan, and I had little Janetta with me, I never thought of there being any harm in it at all."

They were interrupted in their conversation by the entrance of Robert, followed by a supper tray with oysters and porter, for he was determined to enjoy himself in a comfortable way when his wife was out. When he had discussed the oysters and was composedly seated with his feet on the fender and a glass of hot brandy and water in his hand, Emma ventured to open the case to him, and inform him of what she had learnt from Mr. Morgan, and her wishes with regard to engaging in the situation he mentioned. Robert agreed to it very readily; he never had intended to keep a nursery-governess for his daughter. The trouble of educating her, would fall on Jane alone, if Emma left them, but the expense of his sister's maintenance came out of his pocket—therefore, though Mrs. Watson wished to retain her for the value of assistance which she well knew she could obtain under no other circumstances, Robert was quite willing to part with her, as it would be

a certain saving to himself, and would give additional trouble only to his wife. He, therefore, gave her his entire approbation, commending her warmly for thinking of exerting herself, as it was the duty of every individual to do; and even promised, with great liberality, to make her a present of a new cloak and bonnet, when she left his house, that her dress might shew her to advantage. At the same time, he gave her strict injunctions not to forget his interests when she was there; to recollect that it was always the duty of each one of the family to help the others forward; and therefore, if, on any occasion, Lady Fanny wanted an agent for her landed property, or needed the advice of a respectable lawyer, it became Emma's duty to say all she could for him.

Emma promised she would take every opportunity in her power to attend to his injunctions; and soon after this, the girls went to bed without waiting to see the others on their return home.

The next morning was ushered in with a violent domestic storm—such as she never remembered to have witnessed before. How it began, Emma did not know, but she was startled, when quietly sitting in the nur-

sery with her niece, by the sound of loud screams which greatly alarmed her.

Little Janetta looked up and said, very innocently,

“Mama is in a fit—do you hear? I dare say papa is cross to her.”

Anxious to know the cause of the uproar, she ran down stairs, and entering the parlour, the door of which was open, she saw Mrs. Watson stretched on the sofa in a violent fit of hysterics, whilst Elizabeth and Margaret were vainly endeavouring to hold her hands and arms, which she threw about with convulsive energy, whilst her feet kept up a perpetual agitation in a way as far removed from elegance as possible. As her head was turned away from the door, Emma's entrance was unobserved, and her light step was quite unheard by Jane, who continued to scream vociferously.

Fortunately, at that moment, one of the maids observed Mr. Morgan on the opposite side of the street, and running after him, he was soon brought back and introduced to the scene. Whilst he was applying sal volatile and cold water, and soothingly holding the lady's hand, her excitement gradually began to subside; and at length, she was sufficiently recovered to

open her eyes and look round her. But the moment she saw Emma standing near, her languid gestures were suddenly changed into looks of rage, and starting up, exclaiming:

"You little ungrateful vixen, I'll teach you to treat me so."

She aimed a violent blow at her, which, had not Mr. Morgan interposed, and with one arm drawn Emma back, whilst on the other he received the slap himself, would probably have been successful in its object.

"My dear girl," he whispered to Emma, as he withdrew the arm he had thrown round her waist to protect her; "you had better leave the room; I must manage her myself."

She readily obeyed the injunction, whilst the doctor, seating Mrs. Watson on the sofa, placed himself by her side; and, still holding her hand in his, he turned to Elizabeth and enquired, in a subdued and melancholy tone, suitable to the occasion, how this sad affair commenced.

Elizabeth's account was not very clear—and, indeed, she was so puzzled and frightened, that had she really understood the case, she would have been at a loss how to explain herself. The facts were these: After

breakfast, whilst Elizabeth had been out of the room, Robert had informed his wife that Emma was trying for the situation of governess to Lady Fanny Allston's daughter, with his entire approbation.

This announcement was a severe blow to Jane, who did not at all like losing her services. She argued hard against it, representing the impossibility in her delicate state of health, of her doing justice to Janetta or attending at all to her education; the certainty that no other terms would they get a governess so cheaply, and the probability that the household expenses would shortly be greatly diminished by the marriage, not only of Margaret, but of Elizabeth likewise: but it was all in vain; the advantage was all to himself—the evil only to his wife—so Robert was firm; and even when Jane burst into a passion of tears, and began to shew symptoms of hysterics, he was still obdurate. Suddenly the thought occurred to her, how did Emma learn that the situation was to be procured?—and, at this point, began Elizabeth's knowledge of the affair, for she entered the room just in time to hear the question and to answer it. She explained that Emma had accidentally overheard their conversation, and, consequently, questioned Mr. Morgan about it. This an-

nouncement had put the climax to the lady's rage, and brought on the screams and convulsions which had occasioned so much disturbance. Mr. Morgan, however, knew how to manage her.

"My dear madam," said he, in a softly soothing voice; "you know I have forbidden this violent excitement; to people of your nervous temperament, it is decidedly hurtful, and should be avoided. I must give you something to calm you. Miss Watson will be so kind as to bring me a glass of cold water—quite pure water."

"Ah! my dear doctor," sighed the patient, "how could you use me so—join in a conspiracy against me. I *am* astonished, I did not expect this from you!"

"I, my dear Mrs. Watson! What have I done to deserve such censure?—surely, you are under a delusion! I do not understand you."

"You betrayed about Lady Fanny, when I charged you not, you have been the means of setting my husband cruelly against me; making him take part with that little mischief-making vixen, Emma—"

"There, there," interrupted he, placing one finger on her pulse, "you are agitating yourself again; I must forbid such excessive excitement. Thank you, Miss Watson," taking the glass from Elizabeth, "now

please young ladies, open the window a hair's breadth or so, and then leave the room. I always like to have the patient to myself."

Then taking a little case from his pocket, he said: "I have a fine sedative powder here, which I shall give you to calm your nerves," then proceeding to mix something in the glass—which it required a good deal of faith to believe was anything but powdered sugar, he commanded her to sip a little at intervals, and hold it as long as possible in her mouth without swallowing it. Having thus succeeded in stopping her tongue, he proceeded to explain the circumstances of his making Emma acquainted with what he had proposed, taking particular care to allow no blame to rest on her, and saying every thing he could to flatter and soothe Mrs. Watson. "And you see," added he, "was I not quite right in thinking she ought to be removed from you—this may happen again, and it is really too much for you—do you not feel I am right—I am sure your own good sense must prove it—you cannot speak, I know, but press my hand if you agree with me."

It is presumed the pressure was given, as Mr. Morgan seemed satisfied—he raised her hand and looked at it.

"How each slender finger trembles," said

he—certainly, there were few who would have applied such an epithet to her plump and powerful hand. “Indeed, it’s a very naughty hand,” added he, tapping it playfully with the tips of his fingers. “It hit me very hard upon my arm—the hand should be made to pay a forfeit for that; how shall I punish it?”

She smiled languidly.

“I was so provoked, doctor, you must forgive me.”

“Forgive you? oh yes, dear madam, only you know, when a lady strikes a gentleman she ought to pay the penalty attached,” advancing his face very close to her cheek.

“Oh, fie, doctor,” cried she, affecting to be quite shocked, “you are really too bad, —I am ashamed of you quite!” a form of denunciation which would be, in nine cases out of ten, considered as positive encouragement. At this moment the door opened and Robert entered the room.

“Doctor, I say, as Mrs. Watson appears a little better just now, I want to speak to you in my room for a moment.”

Mr. Morgan followed him directly; with a sort of dubious feeling as to what was to follow; but he felt rather relieved by the interruption, as he was conscious he had carried his tenderness quite as far as was

necessary for the good of his patient. Robert wanted to learn from himself about the situation at Lady Fanny's, and questioned him with some interest on the subject; for in a case where his own interest was in no way involved, he was not exactly an unkind brother. He felt on the whole a tolerable share of anxiety that his sister should be as safe and comfortable as circumstances would admit, and was glad to hear from Mr. Morgan a very favorable account of the family in question. At length, having satisfied all the fraternal doubts and scruples of Mr. Watson, he returned to the lady, and was immediately assailed by a shower of questions relative to what her husband had wanted with him.

He only smiled and said it was nothing bad, but he was far too much used to the enquiries and curiosity of ladies not to be expert at baffling such an attack as hers.

"And now, my dear Mrs. Watson," said he, "I must insist on your keeping your mind easy, and not worrying yourself about such things as the occasion of this attack, it is of serious importance, indeed it is."

"But, doctor, how can I keep my mind easy, when I see that little ungrateful thing there, Emma, coming round my husband and persuading him to contradict me. Is

it not enough to provoke a saint, to find one's own husband turned against one by his sister, and that after all the kindness I have shown her; but I knew how it would be from the first, that I did; I always said so from the time those girls entered the house."

"It is very probable, your penetration, my dear friend, might lead you to that conclusion, and you may be right; but in that case, is it not satisfactory to you that there is an immediate prospect of their being removed. Will not Miss Margaret soon be married—does not all the town see that George Millar intends soon, if the lady prove willing, to ally himself to your family. And supposing Emma is likewise removed, you will have nothing left to vex you."

"That may be very true, doctor, but I do not think it is the case; if Emma would only be tractable and obedient, she would be rather useful than otherwise; and really she might be quite a comfort if she were better tempered and more accommodating. But to go and say such things, to be bent on having her own way, without caring about my convenience—to leave me with that child in my hands, never considering my fragile health, and the miseries I suffer,

this is really more than I can bear, it puts me in a nervous tremor which is very bad for me. See how my hand shakes still."

"I see," said the gentleman, contenting himself this time with simply looking at the hand extended to him. "But now I must wish you good morning—remember my prescriptions and pray keep quiet."

The rest of the day was spent by Mrs. Watson shut up *tête-à-tête* with Margaret, bewailing her hard fate in having such a husband and such a tiresome sister; she would not go down to dinner, but indulged in a quiet little regale in her own bed-room of some dainties of a very superior order to the plain boiled beef and suet pudding, which was the family meal. Her husband took refuge with some friends, and Elizabeth and Emma spent another quiet evening together, during which Elizabeth, with open-hearted warmth, confided to her sister how very much she liked George Millar, and how sanguine were her hopes that George Millar did not dislike her. She had seen a great deal more of him than Emma, for their walk to the farm had only been the precursor of several others to different places, and they had enjoyed them all exceedingly. He had not actually proposed to her yet, but he had both said and

done things which led her to expect that such a termination to their acquaintance was in his contemplation. All this was truly the subject of rejoicing to Emma, especially as she was convinced from what she had both seen and heard of George Millar, that he was not a man to draw back from an implied engagement, and hold himself privileged to carry his actions to any point of particularity, provided he never committed himself by word. It was true, had it been *her* taste to be consulted, she would have preferred a quieter person, one more inclined to study and literature, and in every respect more refined; but Elizabeth would indeed be well matched, and the happiness of thinking this, led her to reflect with pleasure even on their visit at Croydon, painful as it had been to herself in most respects.

CHAPTER XIII.

The next morning was ushered in with less of domestic tempest than the last; Mrs. Watson was tired of her own room, and quite ready to come down stairs and mix in the world; she was perfectly amiable to-day, with only the drawback of being a little sulky to her husband, and exceedingly snappish to his sisters, except to Emma, whom she did not condescend to address at all. Emma thought this silence decidedly better than the form of invective which was the usual address to her, so that on the whole, the day passed with tolerable comfort and peace to those concerned.

That afternoon, Mrs. Watson having oc-

casion to send a note to an acquaintance residing nearly a mile from the town, she chose to employ Emma as a messenger, ordering her at the same time, to be sure and not allow Janetta to over fatigue herself, but to carry her if the poor child was tired.

The way led them through pleasant fields, and as the aunt and niece were quietly sauntering along, the little girl filling her hands with daisies, or stopping to watch the birds flitting in the hedge-row, they were again overtaken by Mr. Morgan, who seemed prepared to join their walk. Emma coloured deeply, and was considerably embarrassed by the recollection of what Elizabeth had said about him. They had passed his house on their way, and she could not but suspect that his joining them was the result of design, not accident. With the vanity common to men, he completely misinterpreted the blushes and embarrassment of the pretty girl who interested him so much, and he fancied he was giving her peculiar pleasure, when, after enquiring how far they were going, he assured her that his way led in the same direction, and that he should be most happy to escort her. Had she not been charged with the note from Jane, she

would immediately have turned back, but she had no resource, and as she had not courage to desire him to leave her, she saw nothing to be done but to submit in as quiet and unconcerned a manner as possible.

"I hope," said he presently, "you do not feel any the worse for the excitement and agitation which you went through yesterday."

She thanked him rather coldly, and replied she was very well. But he was not to be so repulsed. He was bent on making himself agreeable to her, and with a quick perception of the readiest means, long practice, and no scruples on the subject, it was no wonder that he succeeded. There was just the proper air of interest, joined to a respectful deference, at the same time that he showed by his intimate knowledge of the family concerns, that he was completely in the confidence of her sister-in-law, and deserving to be treated as a friend of the family. The sympathy which he seemed endeavouring vainly to suppress, and the knowledge of her situation and difficulties, which he allowed her to discover he possessed, all tended to throw her off her guard, and to abate the cold indifference with which she meant to have treated him.

He was so kind—so considerately and properly kind—and then both her brother and sister had allowed him to be so much connected with their affairs, that it was impossible to repulse him, and gradually, she hardly knew how, she found herself led on to speak to him with openness, which he in reality little deserved.

Mr. Moagan was a man of no principles, whose ruling passion was vanity—and this passion with him took one particular turn; he liked to be beloved by all the women of his acquaintance. The self-complacency excited by the worship of a woman, was to him the most agreeable feeling in the world. He did not flirt merely for an idle amusement, like Tom Musgrove, with an entire indifference to the feelings he excited; but he made downright serious, but clandestine love to nearly all the good-looking women with whom his practice brought him acquainted. He liked of all things to watch the gradual growth of an ardent love in the unsuspecting heart, and more than one interesting girl had had occasion to rue the day when illness had first brought her acquainted with Mr. Morgan—more than one young wife had been hurried abruptly from the neighbourhood, as was whispered, because her husband thought her too fond of

the Doctor. Yet so well had he managed, and so general was the admiration he excited, that *he* never bore a fraction of the blame which was unsparingly bestowed on the victims of his arts. This was the man, who struck by Emma's beauty, and seeing her helpless situation, had formed a deliberate plan to gain her affections, though what was to follow when she was thus added to his list of triumphs, he had not quite determined. One thing was certain, he did not mean to marry her; but the necessary evils to which he saw she was exposed, laid her he imagined, peculiarly open to temptation, and he certainly indulged in hopes and speculations, for which even the phlegmatic Robert would have kicked him out of the house, had they chanced to come to his knowledge. One great object in his attempt to remove her to Lady Fanny Allston's was, that it would give him so great an advantage over her. Lady Fanny and her daughter were both invalides, and he was in the habit of visiting them every day. This, could he place Emma there, was an important step, as it would bring him in the most advantageous position before her eyes. She would see no one else. Shut up for weeks together with an ailing child, her only recreation being an hour's drive in the pony

chaise every morning, she would soon learn to look forward to his visit as the great event of the day. He should see her eyes sparkle at his approach, and feel her hand gently tremble as he pressed it. Such had been the case with her predecessor, and now that the poor girl had lost her health and spirits from disappointed affections and heart-sickening anxiety, he was coldly turning to seek another to supply her place. Little did Emma, as she listened to his sentiments of sympathy, his professions of philosophy, or his insinuations of warm interest, suspect the real motive of his actions and his friendship. His age, so much greater than hers, prevented her supposing he would feel attachment, and her own preference for Mr. Howard was a safeguard to her own affections.

After conversing some time with great apparent interest on the subject of education, as appropriate to her peculiar calling, he gradually turned it in an almost imperceptible way to the scene of yesterday. The necessity of subduing passion, and the dreadful effects of it when unrestrained, naturally brought on a comment on the conduct of her sister-in-law. It was shocking, he protested, to think of such violence; it made his heart bleed to imagine

what a mild and gentle-tempered girl must undergo when dependent on such a relative. Hers was a heavy hand as he had experienced; he was delighted that he had warded off one blow from her, he only wished he could more effectually protect her from the other hardships of her lot.

Emma assured him that such a scene had never occurred before, and probably would never do so again; that he greatly magnified the evils of her situation, and that she really did not require such intense sympathy as he seemed inclined to bestow on her. This, so far from stopping him, only brought on a more decided eulogium upon the sweetness of temper which could endure such tyranny, and the self-denial which must be practised daily to live in peace with one who could practise it. How much farther his compliments would have carried him is not known, as they arrived at the lodge-gate, and Emma was obliged to interrupt him to deliver the note which formed her errand. Now she expected to part company, but to her great surprise, she found on turning her steps homewards, that he was still at her elbow, and that he seemed resolved to continue the conversation as well as the walk. What was still more provoking, Janetta claimed his assistance to

carry her again, and Emma had no alternative but to continue with him; and as he caught up the child with glee, and an appearance of positive enjoyment.

"This, my dear Miss Emma," said he, "is a trouble which, I trust, you will not long have to endure; at Lady Fanny's you will not be expected to do any thing which would be more properly entrusted to a servant. You will be Miss Alston's companion, not her slave; and I shall, indeed, rejoice to see it so."

Emma thanked him with a sincerity rather greater, perhaps, than his own, but she could not help heartily wishing that he would demonstrate his interest in some other way than in walking home with her; she was in continual dread of meeting some one who would know her; for, though she really saw no harm in it herself, yet after what Elizabeth had said, she was afraid of being misinterpreted or misjudged. He parted from her at the entrance of the town, and Emma returned in some trepidation homewards.

The whole town of Croydon was, shortly after, thrown into a ferment, by the announcement that George Millar, the rich, the popular, the good-looking George Millar,

was engaged—actually engaged to be married to Elizabeth Watson.

It was so extraordinary, so incredible, so unheard of, that a young woman like Elizabeth Watson—not so very young—for she was at least thirty, they said, if not more—who had never been handsome, and was now decidedly faded—without money, for every one knew she was dependent on her brother—in short, with none of the requisites for matrimony, except a pleasing person, an amiable and unselfish disposition, good temper, and a most affectionate heart, that such a girl should have presumed to try for George Millar's hand! and should have had the effrontery to accept him when he offered! She was a stranger, an interloper—and for her to come, and thus carry off in triumph, their best beau, it was too bad; as the oldest Miss Morgan observed to one of her intimate friends, she was sure there was more than they understood in the business; and she should like to know where they *were* to look for husbands if their fellow townsmen deserted them in that way for strange faces. It was the more hard upon Miss Morgan, because she had been so very kind to the children; she had more than once asked them to drink tea, and

often kissed her hand to them from the drawing-room window. Their houses were exactly opposite, and it would be too much to be forced to sit in contemplation of another mistress ruling in the house where she had long expected to reign supreme.

It was the elder young ladies of the neighbourhood who felt the affront most keenly; and were most bitter against Miss Watson. They had long regarded Mr. Millar as the lawful property of one of themselves; ever since the second month after his wife's death; and, unfortunately for their peace of mind, Mrs. Turner's habit of flattering every one, had given rise to hopes in their minds, which it now seemed never would be realised. The younger ladies felt it much less acutely; for, as a widower and a man verging on forty, they regarded George Millar as a little past his youthful and interesting days, but they felt for their friends and their sisters, and sympathised in their indignation. Had Miss Watson been a stranger, in reality, the affair would have been more endurable; had she been married from Winston, for instance, they would have welcomed her to Croydon with tolerable cordiality—nay, perhaps, with absolute enthusiasm. She might have been pictured then in their imaginations with no

colours less brilliant than those belonging to a gay wedding, and making her first appearance in new finery, she would probably have won popularity immediately.

But now, the case was very different ; it had all passed before their own eyes, so they naturally suspected something quite wrong, and Mrs. Watson was involved in the blame—as it was supposed she must have aided to win the point by some skilful manœuvring.

It was so unnatural, so improbable, that, out of four sisters, three should be engaged to be married, that Miss Morgan declared, over and over again, that she could not, and would not believe it happened in the due course of events. There must be something wrong about those Watsons, and she was determined to find it out.

Elizabeth was very unsuspecting of the storm her engagement had raised, but went about as usual with a smiling face, looking forward to the termination of her residence with her brother, with peculiar satisfaction—and rejoicing especially, because she had a plan in her head for the advantage of Emma. This was no less than that Emma should reside with them ; and since she was resolved against spending her life in idleness, that she should consent to super-

intend the education of Mr. Millar's little girls—for which task, Elizabeth felt she was more competent than herself. In the meantime, she did not mention it to her, until their own plans were arranged with a little more certainty, and the time of their wedding fixed; at present, they could only say that it should not take place for a couple of months at least.

A day or two after this grand event becoming known, Mr. Morgan called on Mrs. Watson and found her little girl in the room. After praising and caressing the child, he asked her if she should like to ride a donkey; and turning to the mother with a winning smile, he added, that he had a very beautiful Spanish donkey, for which, at present, he had no occasion—that it was quite at the service of her charming daughter—for whom, he was convinced, the exercise would be peculiarly salutary. He, therefore, begged she would make use of it as her own. Mrs. Watson gratefully assented; to-morrow Janetta should have a ride—but the little girl cried out for to-day—she would go to-day—aunt Emma must take her out to-day—and she always had her own way with her mother—and as Mr. Morgan was merely following out a concerted plan, she of course, carried her point; and,

whilst she went up-stairs to make her aunt get ready for the excursion, the gentleman hurried away to give orders to prepare the donkey. In about half an hour, Janetta had the delight of seeing the promised animal at the door, with a beautiful new saddle and white bridle, and she clapped her hands with ecstasy as the doctor's foot-boy placed her on, hardly sitting sufficiently still to allow him to fasten the strap in front of the Spanish saddle. Emma felt extremely reluctant to go; she feared Mr. Morgan might again join them, and tried hard to persuade Margaret to accompany her; but Margaret "hated walking like a nurse-maid after the child," and Elizabeth being out, Emma had no alternative but to set out alone.

The foot-boy said his master had ordered him to go with them to see how the donkey went, and to save Miss Watson any trouble. Emma rejoiced at this announcement—although it seemed to her, so unreasonable an encroachment on Mr. Morgan's obliging temper, that she half dreaded lest her sister-in-law should decline the lad's services. Mrs. Watson, however, accepted it all as if, in allowing the favour to be confirmed, she were in reality the giver, instead of the receiver of the benefit. She

seemed rather to expect that he would be grateful that his donkey had the honour of carrying her little girl.

Emma's anticipations proved perfectly correct, for they met Mr. Morgan again, and he again, uninvited, prepared to accompany them. She resolved that this should not occur another time, as she determined at once to speak to her brother, representing how extremely unpleasant it was for her to be daily sent out walking where she was exposed to be joined by any one in this way, and begging that in future the duty of walking out with Janetta might devolve on one of the maids, when neither of her sisters could accompany her. If it had not been that she feared it was wrong, she would have enjoyed the walk extremely, as the day was fresh and invigorating, whilst her companion was particularly pleasant. She found his conversation both instructive and amusing, and as Janetta, on her donkey, kept a little a-head of them, they were free from the incessant calls on her attention with which the child usually interrupted them.

Their *tête-à-tête* did not, as usual, conclude at the suburbs of the town, for emboldened probably by habit, he walked straight home with her, with only the pre-

caution of placing himself on one side of Janetta; and lifting the child off at the door, he carried her in triumph to her mother. Emma expected and hoped that some notice would be taken of his having accompanied them, as she rather hesitated about introducing the subject; but Mrs. Watson seemed satisfied with believing that it was a refined compliment to herself through her child, as if a man of his age could take such pleasure in the society of a girl not yet out of babyhood. Emma was therefore firmly resolved to speak to Robert on the subject, and that afternoon, finding him alone in the parlour, she, with some hesitation, introduced the point. He heard her with considerable surprise.

"Well," said he, when she seemed to have done, "what do you want or expect me to do? what's all this to me, child?"

"I want you, brother, to persuade Jane not to send me out without a maid or some other companion, that I may not be exposed to long walks with him."

"But what harm does Morgan do you, I should like to know—are you afraid he will eat you up—or what do you fear?" enquired he, in a very discouraging tone.

"I am afraid it may excite observation and unpleasant reports, if I am seen re-

peatedly walking with a single man," replied poor Emma, not liking to say that she thought wrong what Robert seemed to regard as so innocent.

"Pooh, pooh, child—don't be absurd and prudish—there's no use in setting yourself up for an immaculate young lady. I don't believe but that you like it all the time, and are only wanting a little domestic persecution to make you more interesting. I am not going to indulge you, so you must find out some other way of making a martyr of yourself."

"Indeed, you are quite mistaken; but I do not think it right to throw myself in the way of any man as I am obliged to do with regard to him, and I would rather not go out of the house for a month than continue, as I have done, meeting him."

"Morgan's a very good kind of fellow, and will do you no harm," repeated Robert, as if rather at a loss what else to say; and Emma, thinking she saw symptoms of wavering in his tone, began to hope that she should carry her point, when Jane entered the room, and her husband at once appealed to her.

Emma's astonishment was great at the way in which she took it. She had ex-

pected she would be angry at her walking with Mr. Morgan; but that was not the case; her indignation seemed only roused by the fact of her wanting to evade the walking at all: she was in a great passion at this.

"A very pretty thing indeed, Miss Emma Watson—a very pretty thing, that you are to be fancying yourself too grand and too great to walk out with my child—want a servant sent after you, do you—I wonder what your ladyship will want next—upon my word, for such a little saucy minx as you, to be giving yourself such airs, is rather too good, I must say."

"I have no wish to give myself airs—I only want—" but she was not allowed to finish the sentence.

"You don't wish *this*, and you don't wish *that*—and you only want something quite different from what I order—I see what it is, Miss, I know you want to be mistress, that's all—and if Mr. Morgan does walk with you, where's the harm of that?—are you such a conceited creature as to fancy it is your beauty which charms him?—depend upon it, *you* are very safe with him. It's for my child that he comes—out of compliment to me, of course—so don't you go pluming yourself upon his attentions,

or expecting anything to come of that—you are greatly mistaken if you think him in love with you, I can answer for it.”

“I never, for a moment, supposed such a thing,” replied Emma, with a spirit, which was roused by her sister’s injustice; “but I am sure that it is not correct or respectable to be walking repeatedly alone with any gentleman, even one of Mr. Morgan’s age and character; and I have a *right*, whilst I live with you, to have my respectability of appearance attended to.”

Mrs. Watson stood with a face of scarlet and her mouth open, contemplating Emma as she spoke with unaccustomed energy—she seemed almost to mistrust her senses at hearing such words, but Emma’s firmness quite appalled her, and she actually did not know what to say. Seeing she was silent Emma added:

“Therefore, for the present, I must beg that when one of my sisters cannot accompany me, you will send the maid in my place; when in company with any one else, I shall have no objection to walk with Janetta as usual.”

“Oh, well,” said Jane after some hesitation, “as you wish it so much, I will see what I can do, and perhaps Martha may walk with Janetta to-morrow.”

Emma thanked her, and the entrance of her sisters, fortunately prevented farther discussion.

Emma was rather surprised that she heard no more from Lady Fanny Allston, but the fact was, her ladyship was ill, and quite incapable of exerting herself in any way; therefore her engagement with Emma was forced to remain unsettled, until she recovered sufficient strength to think again.

Relieved from the care of Janetta's walk the next day, Emma enjoyed the treat of accompanying Elizabeth and the two Millars, during a stroll in the country. Annie of course was her companion, and she found it a very charming change from the incessant trouble of looking after a young child. They talked much of Elizabeth's future prospects, and of Annie's likewise—she was delighted at the idea of the marriage, and anticipated with pleasure the society of a sister. She told Emma she had hardly known George's first wife, as she had been at school until after her death, and often spent her holidays with her own mother's relations; but since there would now be a chaperone for her on all occasions, her home would be much pleasanter.

At the same time, she confided to Emma her secret wonder that any woman should marry at all. Excepting her own brother, she did not believe there existed a single man in the world good enough to serve as a reasonable excuse for a woman becoming his slave. Emma remonstrated and protested at this idea, but Annie laughed and persisted: she asserted that nearly all men were dreadful and selfish, and that as it was impossible to be thoroughly acquainted with their dispositions until after marriage, and it was then too late to change, it was much better not to take the fatal step, but to continue mistress of oneself and one's fortune. She never meant to marry—that was her firm determination. Emma suggested that she might fall in love—but Annie protested again that the fall, which she considered a serious *fall* indeed, was only the effect of a pre-disposition to commit matrimony, and that where the mind was firmly made up, as hers was, on the subject, there could not be the slightest danger of such an accident.

Emma smiled and said time would show, whilst Annie drew an animated picture of the miseries of matrimony, dwelling on all the little trifles which she could imagine or recollect, to convince her companion of the

wretchedness of the state. In spite of the nonsense she talked, Emma liked her very much, and was quite sorry when their walk came to a termination.

Several days passed quietly, and there was, during that time, no solitary walk for Emma; one of her sisters was her constant companion, and sometimes Janetta accompanied her mother, sometimes went out with the maid. Neither did Mr. Morgan plague her any more, they passed two or three times on the road, but a friendly bow was all the intercourse they had together; and when he called on Mrs. Watson, which Emma rather thought occurred pretty often, she never saw him.

Her first interview was on the occasion of his coming to take a quiet dinner, and the cause of his being asked to do so was so grand an event, as to throw his presence quite into the shade. It was nothing less than the first visit of Tom Musgrove to his betrothed. He had written to say he was coming down to Croydon, and the announcement threw Margaret into such a state of trepidation and nervous excitement, as to make Mr. Morgan and a composing draught absolutely necessary for her. She was very near fainting when she received the letter, and indeed was only pre-

vented by not knowing how to manage it. Her next idea was to go out, and see how many of her acquaintance she could meet with, either in the street or their own houses, to whom she might impart the interesting intelligence. She had intense gratification in assuring them of the nervous tremors, the palpitations, the painful excitement, the strain on the mental energies, the soft sensibility, the affecting circumstances, and all other sentiments and weaknesses, with which she was pleased to charge herself. She viewed with much satisfaction, the envy and mortification with which her joyous prospects were viewed by her sweet young friends; and the more cool and indifferent they appeared, the more she enjoyed expatiating on her own delightful situation. Some she kindly congratulated, because they had now experienced her agitating feelings, some she fondly caressed, because she could see they would feel the same in a similar situation, and some she triumphantly hoped might ever be blessed with prospects as bright as her own.

In all this excitement, Emma and her walks were nearly forgotten, and she was suddenly asked, as a special favour, to take Janetta out for half an hour. She could

not refuse, and had the satisfaction of going and returning without seeing any thing of Mr. Morgan, or encountering any acquaintance whomsoever. This gave her courage, and she began to think her fears and scruples were as imaginary as Jane had assumed them to be.

END OF VOL. II.

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